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From Advent to Advent : sermons preached at the Chapel Royal,

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# ADVENT TO ADVENT

## *SERMONS PREACHED AT THE CHAPEL ROYAL WHITEHALL*


BY THE LATE

AUBREY L. MOORE, M.A.

HONORARY CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH
EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE LATE AND PRESENT BISHOPS OF OXFORD
FELLOW TUTOR AND DEAN OF DIVINITY OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE
TUTOR OF KEBLE COLLEGE, AND SOMETIME FELLOW OF
ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

WITH A PREFACE BY

THE REV. WALTER LOCK, D.D.

IRELAND PROFESSOR OF EXEGESIS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
AND WARDEN OF KEBLE COLLEGE, OXFORD


'*Mercy and truth have met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*'—PSALM lxxxv. 10.


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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

It is with real pleasure, and certainly with no surprise, that I hear that a second and cheaper edition of this volume of Sermons is required; for indeed there is no sermon in it that is not worth reading and re-reading, and they appeal to very varied classes of readers. On the one hand, they are entirely loyal to the faith of the Church of Christ, and Churchmen will find in them help and guidance for all the seasons of the Church's year; on the other hand, they are steeped through and through with a belief in the power of reason, and inspired with the conviction that reason has yet a fuller witness to give to religion, and they reach down to those depths of the spiritual life in which the realities of sin and of God make all religious minds akin.

One has lately borne testimony to Aubrey Moore's "theological strength, philosophical wisdom, and historical insight," and each of these qualities finds its expression here. We seem to hear in these sermons the quiet echoes of the fuller utterances of the essay in 'Lux Mundi' on 'The Christian Doctrine of God,' of 'Science and the Faith,' and even of the 'History of the Reformation,' coming in the tones of spiritual appeal and of personal faith. To those who knew Aubrey Moore, it is easy to hear his voice speaking out from behind the printed words, driving home the conviction of sin, demanding an intelligent religion, and pleading for patience and gentleness in judgment. He says himself that "sermons are

valuable only so far as they are real" (p. 5), and we who knew and loved him, and felt what further work he might have done for the cause of Christ, had he been spared to us, willingly stand sponsors to the wider world for the reality of all that will be found in this volume, and are eager to secure that, though being dead, he yet should speak to others the truths so dear and so clear to himself.

WALTER LOCK.

KEBLE COLLEGE, OXFORD,
*The Conversion of S. Paul*, 1897.

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## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THE Sermons contained in this new volume were preached at the Chapel Royal, Whitehall. They therefore assume a wider and more varied circle of hearers than that which was addressed in 'The Message of the Gospel,' and they deal with a wider range of doctrine and of practice than that covered by 'Some Aspects of Sin.' To the intellectual keenness and spiritual depth shown in those former volumes they add a simplicity, a directness, and a power of bright illustration, which can scarcely fail to win for them even a warmer welcome.

Throughout the great variety of themes there are two ever-recurring cadences,—the love of God as seen in the light of the Incarnation, and the responsibility of man as seen in the light of the Judgment. It is these cadences which have suggested the title.

W. LOCK.

KEBLE COLLEGE, OXFORD,
*Lent* 1892.

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# I.

## THE WITNESS OF THE HEART AND CONSCIENCE TO GOD.

'*This is life eternal, that they might know Thee.*'—S. JOHN xvii. 3.

THERE are two facts which lie behind religion as we know it, and are taken for granted by Christianity. Perhaps it would be true to say that the same two facts lie behind all religion, even where they have not yet gained distinctness and definiteness for the religious consciousness. These two facts we may state in a general form as the *belief in God*, and the *consciousness of Sin*. The facts are not less real, because in early days the first is obscured in fetichism or polytheism, and the last recognised in cruel and inhuman rites. And they seem to be for religion both *fundamental* and *essential*; *fundamental*, because religion presupposes, and does not prove them; *essential*, because, as we lose our hold on them, religion, except in a strained and unnatural sense of the term, fades out of our lives.

More than this, the terms God and Sin would seem to be *distinctive* of religion; that is to say, they belong to religion properly, and are used analogically or as metaphors anywhere else. When a metaphysician uses the term *God*, or a moral philosopher the term *Sin*, we feel at once that these are pirated terms, and bring in associations alien from the subjects with which the philosopher and moralist are properly concerned. Thus, when the metaphysician speaks of Being, or Reality, or the universal substance, or the unconditioned and absolute, we feel that, whether we understand him or not, he is not transcending the limits of his science. But the moment he uses the term *God*, as many philosophers have done and do, our suspicions are aroused. We feel justified in asking—How much of that which religion cherishes under the name do you include? Is this 'God' a God whom I can worship and love and pray to, or is He only a God whom I may talk about? So with the term Sin. Just as when we speak of moral evil as *crime* we are thinking of it from a special point of view as the transgression of human law, and punishable by human courts, so when we speak of it as Sin we feel that we have passed within the territory of religion. For sin against man is only a metaphor, the true and proper conception of *Sin*

suggesting at once a Superhuman Being against whom the sin is committed.

GOD and SIN, then, are the two facts with which religion is concerned, and without which religion would not be, and we shall find that they are closely connected with one another. Destroy them, and you destroy religion, or reduce it to a metaphor. When men talk of a 'religion of Philosophy,' meaning thereby that Philosophy is henceforth to take the place of religion in our lives; or when they tell us of a 'religion of Humanity,' meaning that henceforward man is to take the place of God as the object of worship, they are but using the venerable name of religion to disguise the fact of their belief that religion is outgrown. But 'if religions are mortal, religion never dies,'[1] nor will the religious instincts of humanity be deceived by a misuse of words.

But though religion is not going to die yet, it is idle to deny that we are living in a period of great religious ferment. We see all around us the unsettlement which the inrush of new truth always brings. Our very categories of thought are being changed. The old beacons do not shine out as clearly as they did. And we hear men asking, in panic fear,—like

[1] Réville, *History of Religions*, p. 3.

landsmen in a gale,—Will the old ship weather out the storm? Is there anything which can be saved from the wreck? How much can we throw overboard into the raging sea in order that life, at least, may be preserved? Or how much can I carry off in a little boat of my own?

And in the wider area of Church politics, from men whose timidity takes the form of recklessness, we get wild attempts to rehabilitate the truth of God, to reduce it to a minimum which nobody can object to, or, at any sacrifice, to translate it into the language of the popular science, Biology. Or, again, we get from the same people hysterical schemes of Church reform, which satisfy no one but the inventor. What does it all mean?

Surely such panic fear is little worthy of those who profess, like S. Ignatius of old, to be *χριστοφόροι*, men who carry with them and within them Him Who once bade the waves and winds be still. We believe, do we not, that all truth is of God? And for those who believe this, it ought to be possible to look back over the confusions and the struggles of the past, and see in all God's guiding hand leading us to higher knowledge of Himself, and then to turn our eyes out upon the conflicts of our time, neither defiantly nor despairingly, but in faith and hope, and ask, What

is this new truth that God would have us know? How, amidst all these Babel voices, can we yet hear Him speak? What fuller revelation of Himself is now being held out to us by Him Whom truly to know is everlasting life.

In the sermons which it is my privilege to preach in this place, I propose, by God's help, to keep these questions ever before me, at least to approach new truths in this spirit. Sermons are valuable only so far as they are real, and they are real only so far as they reflect the facts which mean most to the preacher, and show how, for him, at least, truths which, in their separateness, are incomplete and mutually destructive, have been gathered up into the unity of a living faith. We distrust, and rightly distrust, those who offer us a short and easy method either of proof or refutation. Men do not all think alike. They do not all start from the same point, or grow at the same rate of spiritual or intellectual growth. Bear with me, then, if in this and subsequent sermons I try and show how it has seemed possible to me to hold true to what religion tells me about God and Sin, and yet to welcome, and welcome gladly, so far as I am able to understand them, the truths which science and philosophy and criticism are daily bringing to light.

It cannot be that the life of the soul is to stand still till the great questions of criticisms and history, which are now stirring men's minds, are finally set at rest. It cannot be that the love of God and the knowledge of God must be in abeyance till science and philosophy have told us the conditions under which we may think of Him. It cannot be that I am to withhold my worship of the Supreme, my hope and trust in the Father's care, till metaphysicians have fought out to the bitter end the question of *personality*. Nor can I acquiesce in a religious interregnum till some new faith rises on the ruin of the old. That also cannot be.

But, on the other hand, it cannot be that because I am a religious man I am to stand aloof in the separateness of my religious certainty, outside the intellectual life of my age, as though it concerned me not; nay, as though God's children had nothing to do with it but to rise up in protest against its conclusions.

What I want, and what every religious man wants, is the power to hold the faith which we learned at our mothers' knees, the faith in God as a loving Father, the consciousness of sin as separating from love, the sure knowledge that God's love in Christ has triumphed over sin, and yet to drink in and

thank God for all that wealth of knowledge which is flowing in to us from every side.

Such an attitude, no doubt, implies assumptions. We take it for granted that the religious instinct is, in the main, a true one, and in all its forms is reaching after the One Eternal God, revealed to us in Christ. We take it for granted that the life of faith is not the satisfaction of one faculty only, but of the whole man, that God is the Object of Love, the Ideal of Goodness, the Perfect Truth, and that as 'the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full,' so the revelations of science and philosophy, no less than the revelations of conscience, of the Bible, of the Church, are necessary to the full unveiling of Him, Whom truly to know is everlasting life. But the correlative of this is no less important, the truth, namely, that the speculative reason cannot by itself satisfy the whole man, and ignore the witness of the heart and the conscience.

The very condition, then, of our entering with fairness and intelligence upon the questions which are seething in men's minds is that we should know what the religious life means and has meant hitherto. And no condition is so frequently ignored.

If we ask, then, what is it that religion implies, we get at once a twofold answer.

I. It implies not as a speculative doctrine, but as a practical and energising truth, *dependence upon God.* An age with evolution on the brain does not need to be reminded that this truth has only gradually come to be what it is to the religious consciousness. That which in its crudest form shows itself as a sense of dependence on unknown and hostile powers, and finds its natural expression in *fear*, in its highest form is a consciousness of dependence still, but it expresses itself in trustful self-surrender to a Father's care. Love has cast out fear, but reverence remains. And this reverent looking up to a power above us has characterised all those whom we speak of as the friends of God, whose lives mark epochs in the religious history of the world. What a wonderful growth and progress in Divine knowledge has taken place in the interval which separates David from Abraham. The great saints of the Bible were men who were willing to learn of God, to take God's hints. They were, above all, men of prayer. They were not, in any strict sense of the term, *theologians.* They knew God by living in His presence, by waiting for His voice, by resting in His promise, by fighting in His cause. They did not stay to ask, Is God knowable? or, Is not this view of God anthropomorphic? or, Does not personality imply a limit? or, Is not an

Infinite Person a contradiction in terms? The Father of the Faithful did not argue with himself as to the rationality or advisability of obeying God's call. 'He went out not knowing whither he went;' from Ur to Haran from Haran to Canaan, even to the ascent of Mount Moriah. He recognised God's will over his life, and for him faith meant obedience. So again with Moses. Moses, it has been said, 'did not believe that the balance of probability was in favour of the theistic hypothesis.' He saw God, and heard Him speak, and talked with Him face to face, and received and proclaimed the Law. Look at David, again. There is no doubt in his mind as to the reality of the communion of man with God. It was direct, immediate, instinctive. Like Abraham, he trusts God. Like Moses, he speaks with God, and hears God's voice; but the religion of David contains in it something higher, something which has made the Book of Psalms for all time the lesson-book of God's children. It is there that we still turn if we would know the highest utterances of the religious affection, the intense longing and thirst of the soul for God. 'O God, Thou art my God.' 'When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?' 'In Thee is the well of life.' 'Thou art my hope and my portion for ever.'

Such a vivid and immediate consciousness of God could not have asked, and would not have understood, the questions which puzzle us. God's saints want to *know* God. We want to *know about* God. And too often the vision of God fades out of our life while we are trying to settle the question whether He can be known or not. Nor is it possible for us to justify ourselves by supposing that such an immediate knowledge of God is impossible in a world grown old in self-consciousness and self-questioning. For we find it not only in the great teachers of the old covenant, who, under God, prepared the way for the revelation of His Son but all down the nineteen centuries of Christianity, from S. John, who recorded for us what he had heard and seen, and S. Paul, who spoke of Him 'Who loved me and gave Himself for me,' to the saints of our own day, that same immediate sight of God, and almost instinctive resting in God is to be found. The race of saints is not extinct, and they are to be found among those who are in the van of intellectual progress, and yet find their deepest religious experiences uttered best in the Psalms of David, or the poetry of some simple Christian hymn.

II. But there is another fact which belongs to religion, and seems as inseparable from it as the feeling of dependence upon God. And that is, the

sense of responsibility to Him for all that we do and are. Here, again, looking back over the religions of the past, we see the slow growth into clearness and definiteness of this feeling of responsibility. From the first, religion assumes that the supernatural object of its worship is not indifferent to the actions of men, that the good man is the favourite of the gods. And when the clear intuition of the unity of God is reached, we get also that great assertion of His righteousness. 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' And from that belief in a Righteous God we pass to the proclamation of the absoluteness of the moral law, and the gradual unfolding of that law in the progressive purification of the moral ideal; while side by side, like the shadow cast by the sun, we trace the growth into awful and terrible distinctness of the fact of sin. It was when men had learned the Holiness of God and the foulness of sin, and the helplessness of man to be what he fain would be, that the gospel of Jesus Christ came into the world, to destroy the separation which sin had brought, and to enable man, in the power of regenerated human nature, to live the moral life, the Life of God.

And here we notice a curious fact in the relation between those two truths on which religion rests—*dependence* and *responsibility*. That very depend-

ence on God, which, if we are to believe some teachers, must paralyse human energy and weaken human character, appears in the practical region as the one great source of moral strength. It is because the man of faith believes so perfectly that he is dependent on God, that he is able to feel so independent in his relation to all beside. 'The fear of God,' it has been said, 'makes men fearless; it is the fear of man that makes them cowards.' In nothing, indeed, is the man of God more sharply distinguished from the man of the world than in his fearlessness, his almost recklessness of faith. He is not careful to estimate the consequences of a right act. He has a higher appeal than the judgment of men, and can afford to disregard public opinion and fashion. He is not afraid to seem to stand alone in doing right. And this is, after all, what we mean by strength of character. He knows that in fighting for the right he cannot be alone; that he is on the victorious side, the side of God; and that God is fighting in him in the great conflict between good and evil.

There are those who are ready to tell us that all this is a thing of the past, that the reign of the supernatural is over, and we must be satisfied with what we can touch, and taste, and handle; that the religious affections must remain unsatisfied, or find an abstrac-

tion, like humanity, on which to rest; and that the witness of the conscience means nothing more than accountableness to our brother man. Reason, we are told, has weighed the claims of religion, and found them wanting. But religion dies hard. Men will not readily give up what has grown into the fabric of their lives. There are no analogies in experience for such a breach with the past. The controversy in which we are engaged is not the collision between a received set of opinions and a mass of verified facts. It is a struggle for life, for that life which consists in knowing God. And here, as in the physical world, it is by living that we prove our right to live.

And he whose life has been lived in the presence of God, and in dependence on Him, whose character has been moulded on the perfect character of Christ, and is daily catching more of the delicate tints of His moral beauty, may go down into the arena of modern controversy, neither fearful nor defiant, but ready for the new truth which comes from God, 'not to destroy, but to fulfil' the elder faith.

The problem as it presents itself to him is not, How much of the old faith must be sacrificed to the new truth? but how is the old faith, the old life, which consists in knowing God, to take up and assimilate into itself—ay, and be the stronger for—the great

discoveries of an intellectual age. He has felt the witness of the heart as it cries aloud for God, and finds its rest in Him; he has known the witness of conscience in the dread and awful sense of guilt; he has seen the witness of character in the long line of saints and heroes. What other witness is God summoning forth to testify of Him? May it not be that the full witness of *reason* is yet to come; reason, the strong giant that will not worship and cannot pray, and yet, in its earnest search for truth, may be bearing on its shoulders, all unconscious, Him Who is the Saviour of the world?

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## II.

### CALMNESS A SCOURCE OF STRENGTH.

'*Be still, and know that I am God.*'—PSALM xlvi. 10.

OF all the duties on which faith in God insists there is perhaps hardly one so much opposed to the common sentiments of our age as the duty of calmness, quietness, stillness. For the very life of our day, so it seems to a superficial glance, is motion, *activity* in its many forms,—*restlessness* in those whose high gifts of intellect cannot stop short at the modicum of knowledge attained, *competition* and *rivalry* among those who are to get on in the world—all of which seem opposed to the state of him who is calm and quiet. To sit still, men say, means intellectual and moral stagnation, or it implies a want of energy and power, which is dishonestly exalted into a sham excellence. Better an unhappy man than a contented brute is a common modern version of an ancient saying. Of course we admire good, quiet people who go on their own way, but we can never

find among them the leaders of men, can never look up to them in moments of doubt, or appeal to them when we feel weak, and unfit for the battle of life.

These are plausible reasonings, and seem at once to put at least this duty of religious calmness on one side. For how can we defend it, or inculcate it without flinging ourselves directly in the way of progress, and apparently canonising things as they are. To be able to be still is both *a sign* and *a source* of real faith and moral force.

I. Look at it first of all in the sphere of action. 'Be still, and know that I am God.' Be still, like the strong, resolute, self-possessed man, who, conscious of his power to act, when the moment of action comes, is content to bide his time. In a chance observer there is less of life and activity in him than in one who, excited and flurried, runs hither and thither undoing as fast as he does. But it is a very superficial view. For the one is as the stillness of a deep and mighty river, the other but the babbling of a tiny brook. The one is the type of stored up and concentrated power, the other of the petty caricature of force which dissipates itself on nothingness. Look at the great men who have left their mark upon the world, who have been the moving forces in the history of their time.

In one and all the same *calmness* is a common feature. That which the poet Wordsworth has seized upon as the characteristic of the real warrior,

> 'Who through the heat of conflict keeps the law
> In calmness made,'

is constantly the index to real strength and power, whether he who exercises it use it in this sphere or in that. Great men think, while ordinary men talk. Great saints pray, ordinary men preach. High sounding words and showy acts may impose upon the few, but it is silent effort which moves the world.

But it is not only a *sign* of power to be able to be quiet and still: it is also a *source* of power. When it is all giving and no receiving, as it is with so many of us, how can we wonder that real power and force is so rare? There is in the spiritual world something parallel to physical exhaustion when we are compelled to live much in public, an exhaustion which can only be repaired by drinking deeply of the well of secret prayer and intercourse with God. Look at the pattern life of the Perfect Man, and think of the thirty years of quiet in the Nazareth home, and the three years of His public ministry, and see how even that short space devoted to what men call active life was refreshed and gathered strength by retirement on the lonely mountain-top, and whole nights spent

in prayer to God. For us, I believe our busy active life, of which too often we vainly boast, is doing more than so-called infidelity to destroy the power of our faith and its efficacy in the work of God. We have so many things on our hands that we have no time for quiet thought. Yet life at high pressure means living on our capital instead of on the interest. It is so physically, the doctors tell us. It is so spiritually as well. He knew much of the secret of real strength in active life who wrote to one he loved, 'My child, live ever in the presence of God alone; seek to be very calm there, not to fall asleep in a deceitful peace, but to gain there the strength which knows how to wait, which believes and combats.'[1]

II. And then this stillness which the psalmist enjoins is not only a sign and source of strength in action, it is a proof of the reality of our *faith and love.* 'Be still, and know that I am God.' This is a constant characteristic of real certitude. It is only the man whose character is doubtful that is always producing his credentials, and flourishing them in the face of the world. It is only those whose position in society is insecure that are always talking of their claims to respectability. Those who really *are* what they would be thought to be, are not careful in this

[1] Lacordaire, *Letters to Young Men*, lxxv.

matter. And in a like manner 'he that believeth will not make haste,' he will rest quietly in his belief, will shun controversy, will be free from the restlessness and excitability of those whose faith is wavering, will be unwilling and indeed unable to treat as open questions truths which are to him part of the very fabric of his life. Yes, say some, that proves his intellectual weakness. Nay, it proves rather his moral strength. It is often brought against us that those who seem to the outside world best qualified, from their great faith, to defend the truth are rarely willing to come forward to enter the lists with anti-Christian champions. There are many who will do this, many who seem to love controversy and argument. But too often that love of argument indicates a deep-seated restlessness, an unreality in the professed faith, an anxiety to establish one's-self in a position which is felt to be insecure. We do not argue the 'pros and cons' when our love is very real and our belief very sure. In days when, from the circumstances of the case, we are brought into close contact with men who believe not in our faith, and love not our Lord, there must be controversy: perhaps it is good that there should be. God forbid that any one of us should shrink from the task when he is called upon 'to give a reason for the hope that is in us'; but the very effort to treat as open questions

truths which God has revealed and we have accepted as articles of faith, is a dangerous thing. To take upon one's-self the character of Christian apologist is a fearful responsibility. Far more responsible a thing is it to offer to leave the platform of Christian truth and discuss questions of the soul's life and death, without bias this way or that. The faith must be a strange faith that can do this. It is one thing to try and help him who longs to know and love our faith; it is another to be willing to treat, as open questions, beliefs which, if they exist at all, must be the very mainspring of our lives. Yet such reasonings and questionings and controversy are too often undertaken in good faith, especially by the young, and those who have not yet realised all the meaning of those words, 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.'[1] And the consequence is that again and again one who has received the truth as it is in Jesus, partly from the inability to rest and wait, partly from a sense of the new power of intellectual apprehension which is developing in him, perhaps with a too strong confidence in the strength of a faith untried and the triumph of a truth half grasped, plunges into controversy with Christian or un-Christian opponents, and

[1] 2 Cor. x. 4.

from an exaggerated idea of what fairness in arguments requires, talks himself into an unreal position, till the faith that he thought to defend is gone, and he finds himself face to face with the problems of life without the guide which God had given him; left, perhaps, to choose between two alternatives, either of which seemed once impossible for him to accept. How has it all come about? He would not rest and wait; he would not be still and know; the good seed sown sprang up indeed, but withered for lack of moisture. 'It is impatience that makes heretics.'[1] Brothers in Christ! will you not guard that precious thing which you have received? Guard it from the rude shock of controversy, and still more from the unreality which controversy so often brings. It is easy to destroy; they who have destroyed alone can tell how hard it is to build again. Guard it as a precious gift to be made ever more entirely your own. Guard it as you would guard from every breath of scandal the fair fame of one you love. And if God call you to fight for His truth, then more than ever seek opportunities for being still, alone with Him. To live the life of faith in the presence of God is the duty of all. To fight for God's truth is a noble but a dangerous service,—a service to which the few are

[1] S. Cyprian, *De Bono Patientiæ*, xix.

called, which can only be safely undertaken by those whose calm and secret source of strength is a hidden life of communing with God.

III. But, once more, a season of religious quietness is not only a season for gaining moral force and strengthening our hold on religious truth; it is also specially a time for seeking the solution of the difficulties which meet us in life. They may be practical, or they may be speculative. There is the very practical difficulty which for many among the young is still unsettled, What am I to do with life? What post in God's world has He called me to fill? Or it may be a more speculative but not a less real difficulty,—How am I to fit in all the new knowledge I have been gaining with the old, simple truths which I was taught at home? Every man who thinks at all is conscious of some difficulties which call for solution, questions which bear very nearly upon life and practice. And in such cases it is natural to turn for help to others, to a parent or to some friend whom we know well enough to trust, and who, we feel sure, is able and willing to help us. That is all right. Surely God wills us so to feel our dependence on one another, yet He never meant that such help should take the place of that guidance which He Himself is waiting to give us if we will trust Him. He never

meant that we should shift our responsibility on another. Too often in these difficulties, and in similar ones, we look outwards when we ought to look *inwards* and *upwards*. And the consequence is that we get disquieted, and distressed, and worried. And the more we beat about for a solution, the more complicated the question becomes. Side issues which we had not at first thought of assume prominent positions, and, before we know it, the balance of life is destroyed. And we run from one to another asking advice or help which we have no longer the strength to use; and energy is dissipated, and force is lost, and the life-blood which should have been spent in some clear and definite effort is wasted, in uneventful skirmishes.

We ought to try, however busy our lives may be, —nay, the more so if ours is a very busy life,—to redeem a little quiet time for bravely facing the difficulties which lie nearest to us, and trying to look at them in the light of God and Conscience. It will, of course, require some strength to do this, and that is why men shrink from it. Yet it is a sure sign of dissipated energy, when men cannot endure to be alone with God and themselves; when they need the stimulus, the excitement of life in the world, and the society and countenance of

others. Alone with God, the difficulty, whatever it may be, assumes its true proportions. It loses the unreality which surrounds it when we put it forward as a problem for others to solve. We become less anxious about questions which loom in the distance, and more ready to grapple with those which are near at hand; more ready to rest in the sure ground that we have won, and to judge the near future by the past. And so our moral strength is husbanded and stored.

So, then, if you would *be strong*, you must learn to *be still*. Hurry, excitement, restlessness, anxious questioning controversy,—all these are marks of weakness, not of strength. Any one can raise questions, either speculative or practical, which nobody can answer. But the firm hold of one truth is a mark of moral and intellectual strength. And every truth firmly held becomes to us a storehouse of new strength. Every article of faith that you have made your own, carries with it the solution of some future difficulty. Every doubt and difficulty spread out, as King Hezekiah spread the defiant letters of Rabshakeh before the Lord, is already half solved. Do not be too anxious to get all at once a complete theory of life, but do the duty that lies before you. Do not be in too great a hurry to get to the end, but use the strength which God has given you. Be still, and be strong.

## III.

## THEOLOGY THE DIVINE SCIENCE.

*'Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.'*—1 Cor. ii. 12.

'This is Life eternal, to know Thee.' Religion is a life and not a science. It comes to man first with the witness of the heart and of the conscience; it shows itself in the consciousness of dependence on God; on the one hand rising up to a yearning desire of the heart for Him Who is Perfect Love and Perfect Beauty; and on the other hand in the consciousness of responsibility to Him, deepening into almost despair, as man learns more of the holiness of God and the hideousness of sin, and his helplessness to be what he would be. The longing of the heart for God, the witness of conscience to alienation from God, carry on humanity to that state which S. Paul describes in his Epistle to the Romans: 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this

death?'[1] The Incarnation of the Son of God, and the Atonement wrought by Him, are meaningless, unreasonable things to those who know nothing of the spiritual needs which Christianity came to supply. And yet just as all religion presupposes and takes for granted some consciousness, however vague and dim, of a superhuman Power on Whom we depend, and to Whom we are somehow responsible, so Christianity presupposes and takes for granted the full-grown consciousness of sin, the full-grown desire for God. It is this contradiction that it solves, this dualism in man's nature that it removes. The God our heart longs for is the Judge our conscience fears. And yet the Christian, with his eye resting on the Cross of Calvary, is bold to say, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.'[2]

But all this time it would seem to a first glance that reason, as we understand it, has hardly spoken. Religion has been a matter of the heart and conscience, not of the head. It claimed a knowledge which was not a *science* but a *life*. The first Christian teachers were 'unlearned and ignorant men.' Even in S. Paul's

[1] Rom. vii. 24. [2] Rom. viii. 1 and 33, 34.

day it was true that 'not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble' were called, that there seemed to be an antithesis between what the world called wisdom and the gospel of Jesus Christ. From the first this had been so. When our Lord preached, 'the common people heard Him gladly,' but the Scribes and Pharisees came to catch Him in His talk or confound Him in the subtleties of their law; and the rationalising Sadducees would ask Him questions which had no answer; and the Herodians, the Erastians of the day, would involve Him with the secular power. But the Publicans and the harlots believed Him, and the poor recognised His teaching as 'good news,' and the sick found in Him a Physician, and the weary and heavy laden came to Him for rest, and a few fishermen saw in Him a Master for Whom they would forsake all. Rational proof of the existence of God, of the Divinity of Christ, of the reality of the Atonement, of the presence of Christ, of His Spirit in the Church,—this was neither given nor required. The strength of Christianity lay still in its appeal to the heart and to the conscience.

And this seeming antithesis between religion and what men called wisdom, appears to be confirmed when we remember how wonderfully little on the side of religion we owe to those to whom we trace back

our science and our philosophy, and how little of our intellectual heritage can be traced back to those who, in God's providence, disciplined and trained the religious consciousness. We do not go to the Old Testament for science; we do not go to Aristotle for religion. There were great and high thoughts of God in men like Xenophanes and Plato, but those high thoughts seemed like the isolated possessions of individuals, not a heritage of truth to be handed on. Compare Aristotle with Plato, and we see that the devoutness and reverence, all that in Plato constitutes what we mean by religion, has evaporated. Nobody knows what Aristotle believed about God; and the mediæval controversy as to whether he was a theist or a pantheist is yet unsolved. Yet, look at the wealth of philosophy and science which has flowed to us from the Greeks. It may be that Christianity has yet to learn much from collision with those Eastern religions of which we now hear so much; but at least, at the present, it will be true to say that we must trace back our religious heritage to the Jews, as certainly as we must trace our intellectual heritage to the Greeks.

But Christ claimed to be the Son of Man, and Christianity was to be the religion of man—of Greek as well as Jew, of rich no less than of poor, of the philosopher as well as of the outcast. We may read

in the story of the Epiphany not only the great truth of the universality of the gospel of Christ, but also the right of reason, no less than of heart and conscience, to a share in the worship of the Lord. The stream of Jewish monotheism and Greek intellectualism must find their unity in Christianity, that through the broad channel of the Roman world-empire they may enrich the world, and man.

Such a blending of the streams, however, is not a thing of a moment. Its earliest beginnings are seen in what is properly called Theology. The first Christians, like the great religious teachers of the Old Testament, were not theologians. Theology is, in S. Paul's words, the attempt to 'know the things that are freely given to us of God.' It implies that reason is coming forward, not to criticise but to establish, to interpret, to defend, the truths hitherto accepted as the witness of the heart and conscience. Religion and theology in different ways have to do with the knowledge of God and of spiritual truth. They have the same Object—God—but their aim and their method are different. Religion *knows* God, theology is concerned with the idea of God; religion *sees*, theology *thinks*. Religion begins and ends in an almost unconscious attitude of worship; theology rationalises and defines the characteristics of the

Object of worship. Theology makes explicit what is implicit in religion. It takes the facts which the religious consciousness has seized, seeks to bring them into distinctness before the mental vision, to connect them with one another in a coherent system, and find in them the explanation and the unity of all that is. Christian theology grows out of Christian religion, as Greek philosophy grew out of Greek mythology. But religion is a Divine *life*; theology a Divine *science*.

This explains the fact that though both Religion and Theology have to do with the knowledge of God, and ideally work in perfect harmony, yet in practice it is not so. Theology is always in danger of becoming unreal. What is an interpretation for one age, becomes 'a tongue not understood' in the next. Hence, when a revival of religion comes, it shows itself in a protest against the received theology. It is no longer regarded as the scientific expression of the very truths that religion values. It is conceived of as the very antithesis of religion, and reformers dream of a new theology which will be for them, what the old theology was to their predecessors, the handmaid of religious truth. When Martin Luther said that 'an old woman who read her Bible in the chimney corner knew more about God than the great doctors of theology,' he was emphasising the

severance which, in his day, existed between religion and the received theology. And when in his *Table Talk* he says, 'A jurist may be a rogue, but a theologian must be a man of piety,'—he touches a real truth. A hundred years later, amid the unreality of the seventeenth century, John Smith, the Cambridge Platonist, said the same: 'They are not always the best skilled in divinity that are most studied in those pandects into which it is sometimes digested.'[1] 'Were I,' he says, 'to define divinity, I should rather call it *a divine life* than *a divine science*.' Technically, no doubt, he was wrong, for theology is a science, not a life: but, like Luther, he was vindicating the truth that it is possible for quite simple people to *know God*, though they know nothing of theology, and that theology, when it becomes speculative and abstract, ceases to be theology.

Such a truth can hardly be too plainly enforced in the present day, for now every one discusses theological problems, and the deepest questions of the human soul are made the theme of articles in the fortnightly and monthly reviews. And this, while it is itself the effect, becomes in turn the cause, of unreality in theological discussion. He for whom theological truth has no value, but as the expression to the reason of

facts on which his whole spiritual life is based, shrinks naturally from these discussions, and they are left too often to those whose chief qualification for the work is simply this—that being committed to no particular belief, they can discuss the matter without bias either way. Indeed, it has almost come to be taken for granted that a man is a better judge of questions of theology if he himself stands outside the faith, raised on a pedestal of sublime and self-satisfied indifference.

Surely it would be truer to say of the theologian as Mazzini says of the artist, 'He must be a high priest or a charlatan.' And charlatanism is the order of the day. Can we wonder, then, that the charlatan in theology is easily discomfited by the high priest of science or philosophy who is fighting for what he believes?

If we are to thread our way amidst the confusions of modern thought, we must find out what it is that theology sets before itself, and what it does not attempt and cannot do. Theology is attacked from two very different points of view: from the point of those who look upon it as the antithesis of the simple gospel, and from the point of those who approach it from the side of speculative thought. Theology, that is to say, is attacked by religion on the one side, by philosophy on the other. It claims to be a Divine Science. Religious people attack it because it is a

science; philosophers because it claims to be Divine. To the former, religion expressed in rational terms ceases to be religion; to the latter, that science is no science which claims for itself unique conditions. With the latter class of objectors I am not now concerned. I want rather to speak of the claims of the Divine Science on those who are trying to live the divine life, while disallowing the claims of theology. Yet the character of theology as both unique and necessary seems to be implied in S. Paul's words, 'We received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us by God.'

If we think of S. John as the Divine, we naturally think of S. Paul as the theologian of the Apostolic band. And why? Because he sought to *know* the truth revealed to the world by Christ. He never forgot the distinctive spirit of theology as compared with the wisdom of the world: he never doubted that it was God's will that man should seek to bring home and make intelligible to the reason his divine inheritance. Yet nowadays men challenge the duty, even the right, to do this. All theology is a rationalising of religious truth, and the line between a rationalism which is the friend, and a rationalism which is the foe, of faith is hard to draw. And so they say, give

us pure gospel truth. Let us cling to the words of Holy Scripture—just simple truths, like, 'God is love'; just simple duties, like, 'Love one another'; just the personal assurance that Christ 'loved me and gave Himself for me'; and the personal sense of being 'accepted in the Beloved.' And all this looks at first so evangelical, so like the primitive faith of the first Christians, that we forget that the gift of reason is as much God's gift as the heart that loves, and the will that acts, and the memory that cherishes, and the faith that clings; and that, just because God has made us what we are, thinking men and women, beings who cannot help asking the questions how? and why? we must seek to bring home to our reason the truth of Christ's gospel,—nay, that we should be wrong if we did not do it, since He has given us His Spirit 'that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God.' Theology is not a human addition, as some think, to a truth which is divine. It grows out of religion, as reason seems to grow out of feeling. If we ever grow into the manhood of reason, if we ever rise to the greatness of our inheritance, we must be theologians or cease to be religious. It is a fruitless struggle to barricade off the religious part of our life while we fearlessly trust our reason everywhere else. It has been tried again

and again; and reason has mocked at, and finally triumphed over, a religion which depended for its existence on never suffering reason to enter the sacred precinct. There is no more fatal, or perhaps more common mistake, than for religious people to think of reason as the Devil's weapon for the overthrow of faith. Such men make the premises for their own conclusions. They are infallible prophets, for they bring about the results which they foretell.

I propose, if God will, to speak further on this need of theology hereafter. I have but touched the surface of a great question. Let me close with a practical appeal.

Look round you, and see the wasted, ruined lives of those who once knew God and now can no longer see Him. Of how many of them might some such history as this be given. They were religious, but their religion was a thing of feeling merely, and as their intellectual life grew they never tried to interpret the faith they held. It was treasured in a napkin; it was hidden away in some protected corner, and gradually, they knew not how, it came to be a hidden skeleton. They dared not bring it into the light of day. And when at last the light of reason forced its way in to that protected recess, it showed the skeleton in all its ghastliness. Ask them, and

they will tell you with all honesty that they believed as long as they could, but a day came when, in the light of reason, they could believe no more. Yes! it is true. But why? Because they distrusted or had no mind for theology, and thought that religion in an intellectual age could subsist as an irrational, because a meaningless possession, or that theology might be picked up anywhere, without intellectual or spiritual toil.

Or, look again at those who in all good faith have lost their faith because they had never troubled to know the interrelations of spiritual facts. They thought they might put on one side all that system of reasoned truth in spiritual matters which saintly thinkers had wrought out in prayer and fasting. And one by one the outworks fell. It was so uncharitable to believe in eternal punishment; so likely to offend to hold a formulated faith; so easy to become morbid if one is much in prayer and self-examination; so difficult to be manly and self-reliant, and yet to hold one's-self to be God's instrument. And never, perhaps, till the citadel fell, were they conscious of a traitorous surrender of the forts.

Brethren, all of us in our several degrees are called upon, in a thinking age like ours, to understand what we believe, to interpret it to our rational nature, to

make it real by making it intelligible, in S. Paul's words, 'to know the things which are freely given us by God.' We do not grudge the thought or time we spend upon art or science, or philosophy or politics. In religion alone do we act as if we thought all rational processes might be in abeyance, as if with our Bible under our arm we might go forth to certain victory. The Bible is the sacred repository of the truth of God, as the Creeds are the scientific frontier of that truth; but neither Bible nor Creeds will serve as a substitute for that Spirit which Christ Himself has given to 'lead us into all truth,' nor will save us from that intellectual effort which is needed that we may 'know the things which are freely given us by God.'

# IV.

## THE DUTY OF REALISING RELIGIOUS TRUTH.

*'Lord, behold here is Thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin.'*—S. Luke xix. 19.

The distrust of theology, of which I have spoken before as common among religious people in our day, is based, in many cases, on a misconception of a religious duty, which, when stated in an abstract form, no Christian would for one moment deny.

'He that saith, I know God, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar.' Why? because his knowledge is not knowledge,—it is unrealised, it has no influence on conduct. S. John is speaking of the duty of realising in practice the great truth that 'God is Love.' He takes what it is now the fashion to call the 'Service of Man,' as the very test of a real belief in God. 'We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.' And such a

test we all of us do naturally take. For, thank God, the days are gone by when a man might be orthodox but immoral. There are such people still, but perhaps the greatest gain which is to be set off against what seem to be the losses of religion in our time is, that we have learned to know that orthodoxy is valueless if it is not rightness of life, as well as of belief, or, in other words, that a faith is no faith if it be not realised in life and conduct.

But that word 'realised' is one of the hardest words in our language. There are so many ways of realising truth. What do we mean by it? When a great sorrow comes to us, especially if it be sudden, we find ourselves saying to ourselves or to others, 'I don't seem to realise it.' I know it is true, but, even while I am thinking of it, my thoughts run back into the old channels. I am living still in imagination the old life which has passed away, and find myself waiting still for

> —'the touch of a vanished hand,
> And the sound of a voice that is still.'

And then the consciousness of my sorrow comes in upon me afresh, all the more saddening because I accuse myself for having even for a moment forgotten it. Something of the same kind is true, though it is less common or less obvious in the

case of a great joy. It is quite true. I know it is true, and yet I find myself acting and thinking as if it were not. I do not *realise* it all at once, for to realise a great sorrow or a great joy means, in some way or other, to change my whole way of looking at things, to speak and act and think with the new sorrow or the new joy giving its colour and its tone to everything. Till it does that, it is a fact outside, external to our lives, and such a fact is the most unreal of all things. For it is unrealised.

In the intellectual region of our lives something of the same kind goes on. A new truth is launched upon the world. We are sure it is established, but it takes perhaps years for that new truth to be realised, to work itself out into all the departments of human knowledge. No truth stands alone; it must have real relations with all other truths, and must so far change our views of them. And this takes time. Think what a change is implied in the acceptance of the Copernican in place of the older astronomy, how the astronomers had to recast their science, how those students of nature who were not astronomers slowly realised the fact that they too had a direct, and not as it seemed at first an indirect, interest in the discovery. Or take such a doctrine as that of Evolution, and see how slowly even those who have accepted

it have realised its bearings on our whole view of nature, and then see how the same theory—or, if you will, the same impulse which showed itself in that theory—is gradually affecting politics and theology and morals. We have not 'realised' all that Evolution means, even though we may have accepted it as true.

Once more, think what realising a truth means when it was not an event which affects life with joy or sorrow, nor a speculative truth which has to work itself out into all the departments of our intellectual activity, but a great truth which alters our view of life, involving as it were a reconstruction of the whole. How slow we are to realise such a truth! How loath to break away from old prejudices, old associations, old habits, old modes of thought! Think what it must have been to the disciples of Jesus to find that the kingdom to which they belonged was not of this world; that the old national belief in a temporal sovereign must be abandoned for ever; that the Messiah was the Saviour not of the Jews only, but of the Greeks, not of the civilised, but of barbarian and Scythian, bond and free; that there was nothing common and unclean in that nature which Christ had taken into God. How long it was before they realised this and allowed the new view to transform their life and thought!

In the life of the individual, we see something of the same kind in what we call 'conversion.' Conversion means the acceptance of a new view of life, the submitting ourselves to the influence of a new power which may permeate and transfigure life. But conversion takes different forms in different men. A man 'converted' from a sinful life begins by the will to change his conduct, and though the old nature may struggle still against the higher will, though he may often fall, yet he has made a breach with his past life, and is striving to realise in the future that new truth to which, in his conversion, he surrendered himself. But sometimes conversion is rather intellectual than moral, the change not from a bad life to a good one, but from a false to a true view of what a really good life is. S. Paul's conversion was of this kind. He had lived 'in all good conscience'; he had been in earnest in his Pharisaism; he had been conscientious in his persecution of the Christians; he thought, when he looked on at S. Stephen's martyrdom, that he was doing God service. But that light which shone on him on the road to Damascus showed him the Figure of One Who had been left out in his view of life: 'I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest.' And from that moment his life began to be something different. 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?'

expresses the new view. And in the three days' darkness, and in the retirement of Arabia, he learned to realise what it all meant, to bring home to his intellectual nature the new truth, and in the light of it to reconstruct his very theory of life. Then it was that, not less earnest, not less conscientious, not less certain, he goes forth to preach the faith which once he destroyed, to bring all the wealth of his learning, all the rich versatility of his nature, all the wide grasp of a strong and educated mind to the work of the gospel, that he might teach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. S. Paul not only knew that Christianity was true, he *realised* it, brought it home as it were to every part of his wonderfully varied nature. He will know nothing and preach nothing but 'Jesus Christ and Him crucified.' But that has come to be not only the central point of all his knowledge, but the keystone in the arch, the truth to which all else owes its meaning.

And why have I said all this about the different ways in which we realise knowledge? Because I want you to see that if our Christianity is to be a real thing, it must be *realised in*—that is to say, *brought into relation with*—every part of our nature. It must justify itself to our reason no less than to the active side of our life. Just in so far as a truth is unrealised

it is a dead truth; that is to say, it is no truth. We may hold it in a formal, lifeless way, but it is nothing to us; it is external to our life, our will, our self. It is like the pound laid up in a napkin.

Now, is it not a strange thing that while every one admits the duty of realising our faith in practice, and is at once prepared to admit that a faith that does not influence the life is no faith at all, men are so slow to admit the parallel truth that faith must be realised in *knowledge*, brought into clearness and distinctness before our mental vision, 'that we may know those things which are freely given us of God.' This is the work which theology seeks to do. To speak lightly of theology, is to abandon the belief that Christianity was meant for rational beings, that religion covers not merely a part, but the whole life of man. It is suicidal for a man who is both rational and religious to refuse to recognise theology as the necessary outcome of religion,—necessary for us, that is, because we are reasoning beings. A great mediæval Archbishop of Canterbury puts it thus: 'Though due order requires,' he says, 'that we should believe the deep things of the Christian faith before we presume to discuss them by our reason, yet it appears to me a neglect of duty if, after that we are established in the faith, we do not take pains to understand what we

believe';[1] that is to say, we are no less bound as *rational* beings to understand our faith, than we are bound as *active* beings to practise our faith. The seeking to know, the ceaseless questioning, the constant asking the why? of all that we hold as fact, is the very impulse which lies behind our rational life. And people have allowed themselves to think that what is both rational and necessary everywhere else is somehow wrong in religion. And so their religion is never realised in knowledge. It is folded up in a napkin, put away in that part of their nature where reason never comes. And even if it shows itself in practice, it does not show itself in knowledge.

But Christianity cannot acquiesce in such a division of territory. It claims the whole man—his affections, his will, ay, and his reason too, as its proper possession. It claims to be a religion which can justify itself to the whole nature of thinking men.

This, then, is the work which theology in every age has to do. It interprets the abiding truths of Christianity to the reason of the day, and when from any cause a change has passed over the intellectual atmosphere, a new theology appears, to claim for Christ the new truth, whatever it may be. They who value the Master's trust cannot be satisfied to treasure

[1] S. Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, I. 2

it up in a napkin and say, 'Lo, there Thou hast that is Thine.' They must use it as He willed them to use it, that in the end He may receive His own with usury.

There is, in this respect, a difference between theology proper and the Creeds of Christendom. The Creeds are the scientific expression of the truth once for all delivered to the saints. They were beaten out by controversy with those who denied the faith. They are the 'scientific frontier' of the faith. But in two points they differ from theology or Christian philosophy: (*a*) They claim finality, which Christian philosophy does not and cannot do; and (*β*) they do not attempt to bring the faith into relation with our knowledge, or to justify it to our reason as Christian philosophy does. Their function is to state and guard and outline the faith. Compared with that theology which realises Christian truth by interpreting it to the reason, they are as outline maps to a coloured landscape. Compare the growth of the Nicene Creed with S. Athanasius's treatise on the Incarnation. The one will seem technical and unreal; the other brings the great doctrine into relation with what men in his day knew and thought of the world and man. Compare, again, the Athanasian Creed with S. Augustine's treatise on the Trinity, written,

perhaps, in the same atmosphere, and the same fact comes out. The Creed defines with technical precision; the treatise brings home the doctrine to the moral nature by showing its relation to the truth that God is Love. As we travel down the stream of time we find that it was S. Anselm's great work to express the Christian belief about God and the Incarnation in a form which would appeal to the great legal age. To us it seems hard and scholastic because their thought is not ours, and Calvinism has made us shrink from introducing into Christianity the language of the law-courts. Even more obviously do we feel this when we come to the greatest of the schoolmen, S. Thomas Aquinas. We have neither the subtlety nor the precision of the scholastic age, so we affect to despise what we cannot imitate. Besides, the world has made a new start since the Middle Ages, and we want a theology which will bring Christianity into relation with our ways of thinking. We want, in a word, not a new faith, nor a new Creed, but a new theology, to do for us what theology in the past has done for other ages, to realise to our thoughts and reason the eternal truth of Christianity.

It follows, as a natural consequence, that no theology of a past age is adequate to the needs of the present. For theology, like any other science, corre-

lates existing facts, it does not prophesy what is yet to come. But for a religious man to say that religion can exist without theology, is an act of intellectual suicide. Religion must satisfy the whole man, or it must abandon its claim to be the religion of man.

As surely, then, as it is a duty to realise faith in life because we are creatures of action, so, if we are rational beings, it is our duty to realise faith in knowledge. And if the one requires moral effort, the other requires effort intellectual and moral too. And such an effort every thinking man is bound to make. If the present age should produce a S. Paul or a S. Athanasius, a S. Augustine, a S. Anselm, a S. Thomas, it would still be the duty of each one of us, as thinking men or women, to work out our own faith into knowledge. Here, as elsewhere, 'no man may deliver his brother,' though we may bear one another's burdens. It is our inalienable right as thinking men to reason; it is our inalienable duty as religious men to realise our faith in knowledge. We would fain keep the trust committed to our charge, the religious truth on which our spiritual life depends. How shall we keep it best? Treasured in a napkin? hidden away from our rational life? kept safe but useless? Lord, behold, here is Thy pound, which I kept laid up in a napkin. I was so afraid of

losing the precious gift, that I never even used it. Mine was a Sunday religion; I kept it quite safe apart from all that interested my rational nature, philosophy, science, politics, morals, art, literature, for fear it should be lost. Here is Thy pound.

Or shall we fearlessly, and at the cost of whatever effort, bring it forth into the light, believing that in the ancient truth, the ancient faith, we have not the substitute for, but the unifying principle of all that is, the key to the great problems and mysteries which surround our life. We may have to give up pet theories and catchwords which have become dear to us; we may have to welcome new truths which at present are hard to reconcile with the old; we may have to give up old weapons which, in the new light, we may have to confess we never should have used. But it will only be that the old eternal truth revealed to the world in Christ may shine more clearly than it has ever shone, lighting up and transfiguring by its light every part of human life and thought, the lofty heights where Reason has her home, and the peaceful valleys of almost instinctive Faith, for the One Object of man as man is the Eternal God, Who has revealed Himself to us as the Son of Man.

# V.

## LEADING BY GENTLENESS TO GREATNESS.[1]

> '*Thou hast also given me the shield of Thy salvation; and Thy right hand hath holden me up, and Thy gentleness hath made me great.*'—PSALM xviii. 35.

THE eighteenth Psalm is to be found twice in our Bible, almost word for word. It is found in its place among the collected Hymns of David and of others which we call the Book of Psalms, and it is found also in the twenty-second chapter of the Second Book of Samuel in its proper historical setting. It is a song of praise and thanksgiving to God when David was delivered from the persecution of Saul, that deliverance being made by the Psalmist an occasion for a grateful looking back to all God's dealings with him, —how in distress God heard his prayer, how when surrounded by enemies God saved him from death, how the same God had been to him a strength in the time of weakness, a shield in the hour of danger, a

[1] Preached in Whitehall, Christmas Day 1887.

light when all seemed dark, a rock of defence when the waves raged round him, a source of greatness when he seemed despised.

'Thy gentleness hath made me great.' That word 'gentleness' seems to have puzzled the early translators. Luther translated the text, 'When Thou humblest me Thou dost make me great,' and the older English version, which survives in the Prayer Book, conveys something of the same meaning. 'Thy loving correction shall make me great.' But recent scholarship confirms the rendering of our Authorised Version—Thy gentleness, Thy lowliness, Thy condescension, as the Revisers' marginal reading has it. And, after all, is not this more in accord with what we know of God's dealing with man? He does indeed bring down the high looks of the proud; but with those whom He is leading from lowliness to greatness He deals differently. He does not humble them but Himself. He empties Himself that He may make them full. And David, looking back over God's dealing with him, seizes a great truth,—nay, the great truth of God's dealing with man, that truth which we Christians contemplate in all its fulness on Christmas Day, as we bow before the Mystery of the Incarnation—God is Love. He did not *become* Love at any moment in this world's history, though in the

fulness of time that Love was fully revealed to man in the Birth of Jesus Christ. And the unvarying characteristic of love, seen, as in far-off copy, in every true, pure, human love, is self-sacrifice, self-forgetfulness. The Incarnation is not only a great fact in the world's history; it is also a great lesson for all time. It reveals to us (1) God's method in the salvation of the world; and by so doing teaches us (2) how we must act if we are to be fellow-workers with God.

I. To talk of God's method seems at first almost profane. How can we, in the presence of the transcendent Love of the Incarnation, stay to ask How? or Why? And yet, wonderful as it may seem, the love of Christ for us is, both by Christ Himself and by His Apostles, set forth as the model for us to imitate: 'A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.'[1] 'This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.'[2] And S. Paul accepts and enforces the same duty: 'Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us';[3] while S. John,[3] the Apostle of love, makes a Christ-like love for man the natural outcome of God's love for us, drawing from

[1] S. John xiii. 34. [2] S. John xv. 12.
[3] Eph. v. 1; 1 S. John iv. 11; iii. 16.

His love its source and method too: 'Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.' 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' What, then, we ask with all reverence, is God's method which He chose for the salvation of man? And the answer comes, 'He humbled Himself.' He emptied Himself of His Glory, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. 'God was made man,' says S. Athanasius, 'that man might be made God.'[1] 'So low had man fallen by his pride,' says S. Augustine, 'that nothing but the humility of God could raise him.' 'What wonder is it,' says the same father, speaking of Christ's washing His disciples' feet,—'What wonder is it that He should rise from supper and lay aside His garment, Who being in the form of God had emptied Himself of His glory, and girded Himself with the towel of human nature?'[2] It is the method of Divine Love, the love which condescends, which forgets itself in the object of its love, which stoops to earth that it may raise to heaven. *It is God's gentleness which makes man great.*

Dimly, but with growing distinctness, we trace

[1] S. Athan., *De Incarnatione*, liv.

[2] S. Augustine in *Johannis Evang.*, lv. 7.

that same gentleness in the pre-Christian ages. We look back and see how God prepared for the Advent of His Son, how He educated the world, 'line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little,'—vouchsafing not a great blaze of light which would dazzle and confound, but a progressive revelation of moral truth, as men were able to bear it. It was God stooping down to man, making allowance as it were for the hardness of heart, and the perverseness of will and slowness of understanding; waiting for the fulness of time; speaking in the meanwhile by prophet and philosopher and moralist, unfolding something of the perfect character in every self-denying life, in every earnest search for truth, in every vision of moral beauty, in every glimpse of moral law; till all the broken lights were gathered up in Him 'Who, being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person,'[1] became man, taking our nature unto Himself.

It is that 'condescension' which staggers human nature. Man rebels against it now and always. It hurts our pride. We can understand or imagine a progressive development from man to God, a series of discoveries of spiritual and moral truth, but a revelation from God, except in the vague sense in which

[1] Heb. i. 3.

every discovery is a revelation, this men shrink from and would explain away. 'They have a greater quarrel,' it has been said, 'with God's condescension than with all His other attributes.'[1] They would be Christians without the Sacraments, Christians without a Church, Christians without the Incarnation, Christians without a Revelation. For in the last analysis there are but two theories as to the method of God's dealing with man,—the *sacramental* theory on the one side, and that which, for want of a better name, we may call the *commercial* theory on the other. The latter theory, in all its many and varied forms, puts man first, not God. Its principle is that of a *quid pro quo*. The Roman doctrine of good works, as popularly understood (or misunderstood) by Protestants, is only one form in which this commercial view appears. Its cause lies deep in human nature, in the rebellion of the heart against the unmerited love of God. And it shows itself not only amongst those who speak or think of their own 'works and deservings,' but among religionists whose watchword is justification by faith only. Such people often come to talk of faith as if it were man's half of the contract, by which he establishes, if not a legal, yet a moral claim upon the mercy of God; yet they hold up their hands

[1] Pusey's *Minor Prophets*, p. 93.

in pious horror at the thought of those who believed in deserving grace 'of congruity.' So subtly has the reaction worked. The fear of that half-understood phrase *ex opere operato* has driven men into a new but scarcely disguised theory of human merit. They deny to God the power or the will to bestow His gifts upon us, at least till we have been consulted on the matter, perhaps till we have contributed to the result. What else is the meaning of that view which makes Holy Baptism the sign of a grace already won, or a symbol of something not yet received, which by a charitable hypothesis and a liberal hope we speak of as already present? What else is the meaning of that view of Confirmation which teaches that the child confirms himself in his baptismal promises? What else is the meaning of that view which makes the promised Presence of the Lord in His Sacrament dependent on the faith of the receiver?

The sacramental theory of God's dealing with man flows straight from the fact of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and the recognition of it is simply the willingness to receive God's gifts as from Him alone, instead of offering Him compensation before or afterwards. It sees in the Sacraments the expression of the same love which moved the Eternal Son to become man, to suffer and to die for us 'while we

were yet sinners.' It does not wait for human merit. 'Before they call, I will answer.' Did Christ wait till human nature was *fit* to be taken into God? Did He not humble Himself that He might lift us up? So He deals now with every little one that is brought to Holy Baptism. He lifts it up into union with Himself; gives it, before it can breathe a prayer, 'that thing which by nature it cannot have,' the beginning of a new and supernatural life. 'Seeing now this child is regenerate,' does not, in Christian language, mean,—seeing now that we believe that this child will some day take upon itself Christian responsibilities. It expresses a present fact, and they who kneel around the font are taught to pray 'that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning.'

So with Confirmation and Holy Communion. For there, too, God does all. God cannot there, any more than in Holy Baptism, make a 'division of labour,' as it were, between God and man. God does all. We ourselves contribute nothing. Man's part is only this: to come with clean hands and a pure heart to receive the Gift from God, to search and look that no separating sin bars the entrance of Divine Grace. 'All our salvation is from God; all our destruction is from ourselves.' The doctrine of Justification by Faith

is a sacramental doctrine, or it becomes a cover for a subtle theory of human merit, and ceases to be true.

II. How, then, are we to apply this Divine method in our own efforts to work for man? For surely just as our triumphs and discoveries in the domain of nature are due to the observance and imitation of God's wonderful workings there, so every victory in the moral world, everything which gives us power and influence in bringing men to their true greatness, is due to a conscious or unconscious imitation of God's dealing with His children. And here we find ourselves face to face with a strange contradiction. The world is openly claiming the Christian method, as it has caught something of the Christian spirit, and the very thing which human nature resents most in God's dealing with us is recognised as the true method, and the only true method, in dealing with those whom we are seeking to raise.

And here, too, the method which the world is at least in theory adopting from Christianity is the direct opposite of that which men naturally employ in dealing with their fellow-men. It is the method of *sympathy*, and what is natural is *selfishness*. If one has done us a wrong, human nature says, 'Pay him back in his own coin.' At least stand up for your rights: an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.

God says, and man is learning the wisdom of it too, 'Exercise the divine power of forgiveness. Overcome evil with good.' 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him.' Again, if a man is tempted by pride to raise himself out of his position, human nature says, 'He must be kept in his place,' his insolence must be put down, and with the best of motives we take upon ourselves the duty of snubbing him just for his good. God would say, 'Why not by gentleness, by lowliness, by condescension try to make him great?' Come down to his level, if you are so much above him, and then perhaps you may raise him. This is what we are being so constantly told, as if it were a discovery of the present century. If you are to raise the masses in our great cities, it is constantly said, it must be by recognising them as brethren, not by charity given from some lofty height above them, but by going amongst them and making them feel, rather making *yourself* feel, that you are sharers with them in a common humanity, and that differences of wealth and position and intellect are as nothing in view of that which you share with them. And is not this just the lesson of the Incarnation, that Christ left the right Hand of God that He might become one with us and be made like unto His brethren? It was Infinite Love revealed in *sympathy*.

III. Again, one of the great secrets of success in working for others, and especially in teaching others, is *patience.* We find ourselves face to face with an enormous amount of ignorance, and few things try our patience more than this, especially as ignorance and obstinacy nearly always go together. And if we do something to remove ignorance we are met by, what is no less trying, the hopeless one-sidedness of those who, having mastered one idea, are afraid lest any other should conflict with it. How is it possible to make such people realise what they should be, to lead them to greatness? Let us read the answer in God's dealing with man. How slowly He taught the world about its greatness! Nay, how patient has He been with us, when we opposed His teaching by the dulness of spiritual ignorance, or by the self-complaisance of those who had just caught a glimpse of truth! If our patience is often tried, how often has God been 'tried,' if we may use such a term of Him, tried by misbelief or unbelief, or the 'picking and choosing' amongst revealed truths, which is of the essence of heresy! And yet all through, His gentleness, His patience, His condescending, as it were, to the difficulties which beset imperfect knowledge and imperfect love, were waiting still to lead us on to greatness. In the face of that patient love, can we

ever say, as we are tempted to do, 'I have no patience with this man; I have given up that man as hopeless.' What if God had done this with us instead of leading us on to a higher knowledge of Himself?

IV. Once more, in dealing with our fellow-men we are sometimes called upon to *judge*. We are dealing, perhaps, with one who has greatly sinned, and in the presence of a flagrant breach of God's law, it seems as if we must be stern and hard and uncompromising. It would never do to pass it over. That would only be to encourage sin. And so often a poor sinner who, remember, was made for greatness, as God made you, is allowed no place for repentance, perhaps is swallowed up with despair, perhaps for want of a kind word is hardened, and, as we say, goes from bad to worse, till repentance becomes impossible. God knows, we dare not speak or think lightly of sin in any form, but in judging it—and we all must judge sometimes—we do not discriminate enough between the sinner who needs to be helped, and the sinner who needs to be punished. And yet, even when punishment is needed, who of us, without hesitation, will dare to pass the sentence? I cannot imagine a case like this without there rising up before my eyes a scene which we all know well. A woman guilty of a deadly sin stands in the presence of the Sinless One,

Who, though so merciful, can in no wise clear the guilty. Her accusers, righteous, upright, respectable men, no doubt in their way, slink away one by one because they dare not cast a stone, and when all are gone the strange words are heard, 'Hath no man condemned thee? Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more.' What! will any dare to say that Jesus Christ made light of that terrible sin of adultery? Do we not feel in a moment that He was doing, as God ever does, leading by gentleness to greatness, not wishing the death of a sinner, but that all should repent and live?

Tenderness in judging, patience in teaching, sympathy with the lowly, the despised, the poor,—these are the forms in which we recognise the likeness of the love of God, the gentleness which makes man great. It is the method of God as revealed in the Incarnation. Learn, then, to measure your strength by your gentleness, your knowledge by your patience with the ignorant, your faith by your sympathy with those who are out of the way, your purity by your tenderness for the sinful and the fallen. It is the only test by which, in your relations with others, you may know whether you have caught something of His Infinite Love Whose gentleness has made you great.

# VI.

## THE PRESENCE OF GOD WITHIN US.[1]

'*And he said unto Him, If Thy Presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.*'—EXOD. xxxiii. 15.

A FEW words will suffice to recall to mind the occasion upon which these words were spoken. Moses, the servant of God, the man of whom it is said that 'the Lord spake to him face to face as a man speaketh unto his friend,' is standing in the tabernacle. The cloudy pillar, the symbol of the Divine Presence, is at the door, and God and man hold mysterious converse. The chosen deliverer, who had brought the people of Israel through the Red Sea, is now bidden to advance one stage further, to bring the people to the promised land. But the command is accompanied by a token of God's anger against the disobedient people: 'I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee by the way.'

[1] Preached on New Year's Day 1888.

Once more Moses stands as the intercessor. With a holy boldness he pleads God's goodness to him in the former days: 'Thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in My sight.' The appeal to God's goodness is not in vain. At once the answer comes: 'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest'; and as though made bolder still by that promise, the Israelitish leader gives utterance to the words, 'If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.'

We can hardly choose a fitter subject for meditation than this thought of God's Presence with us, and the necessity of that Presence if we are to go forward in life's journey.

We are met to celebrate a double festival: a festival of the Church and a festival of the world: the Circumcision of the Lord Jesus, and the advent of a new year according to our secular reckoning. See how this thought of God's Presence with us connects the two.

I. We have entered on a New Year — another volume in our soul's history is closed, and few of us, I suppose, have suffered the old year to be gathered up into the records of the past without something of a retrospect, a looking back. And retrospects are always sad. The very fact that the past is past is

saddening, whether it bears with it a burden of sorrow or of joy. Except for the very young who have not realised what life is, the almost instinctive thought is 'few and evil': 'few and evil' are the days of the longest life. We look back, and we see broken resolutions, bright dreams scattered, youthful hopes unrealised, change and decay everywhere, sorrow perhaps, bereavement, distress, sickness, failing power; be it what it may, there is much to sadden in the past, so little really done, so much left undone, and in the case of those who cannot look forward to many years yet in store for them, ay, and perhaps in many another too, when the plans for the future are for a moment forgotten, there rises so naturally the desire, 'Carry us not hence.' We have wandered enough, when will wandering cease? Is life worth living after all? Shall we not echo the sad words of an ancient poet, 'Never to have been born is the happiest lot, and next to that the best is speedily to depart whence we came'?[1] These, I say, are the *natural* thoughts which a retrospect suggests. See how they are transformed when the retrospect is made a religious retrospect. The facts are the same; failure, disappointment, sadness, sorrow; but in all and through all there is a Presence which makes all these

[1] Sophocles, *Œd. Col.*, 1225.

things not isolated facts but parts of a great system. There is a unity, a purpose in it all—one thing that I see continually, *the good hand of my God upon me*, comforting me, holding me, guiding me. I made great plans, and they failed; noble resolutions, and they were broken; and I learned that I had begun at the wrong end. I know now, if success is won, it is not I but Christ in me. I look back, and I see a great cloud of sorrow resting on me, making everything seem so dark at the time. I know what it meant now. It is good for me that I have been afflicted. It was God's Presence in a cloud. I remember a time of doubt and distrust and wavering faith. I remember when the contradictions of life puzzled me, drove me back to great fundamental questions, Can God be loving and omnipotent? Is it not simpler to give up my faith? And in the night the pillar of fire was seen, the guiding Presence which made darkness bright. The good hand of my God upon me,—there is the explanation of the past, that is what makes sad retrospects so helpful.

For I am going forward, entering on a new year of life, a strange, unknown land, which I could hardly dare to approach if what men say were true. Men say the future will be like the past; you will make plans and see them fail; form resolutions, and

have to own them futile; there will be change in the future as there has been in the past; all calculations will be baffled by the strange march of events. After all, man is but the creature of circumstance, tossed this way or that, now in happiness and now in misery, as fortune's wheel goes round. And down through the ages an echo comes, 'My Presence shall go with thee' in that unknown future. My hand shall guide as it has guided hitherto. 'Certainly I will be with thee.' And as we listen to the words, all the sad retrospect comes to our aid. In all my chequered, changing life, the good hand of my God was with me, ordering all things well. I cannot, *will* not fear the unknown future. Yes, under one condition, and one only, I will fear: 'If Thy Presence go not with me, carry me not up hence.' I *dare* not walk alone, without the Presence of my God, whether it be revealed in cloud or fire. But if God is God it is an impossible condition. He must cease to be God before He forsakes those who rest in Him amid the world's unrest. Oh! if experience is any guide, if, as the men of science say, the knowledge of what has been is our sole evidence for what will be, the only thing that justifies 'the leap to the future,' then I will answer boldly, He Who was with me in the past, ordering failure or success, sorrow or joy, He Who

wrought so wondrously for ancient Israel and for His saints in every age, 'knows neither variableness nor shadow of turning.' This God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide, even unto death.

II. But our New Year is connected with the Feast of the Circumcision. And Circumcision, as we know, was the sign by which each individual who received the rite was assured of his part in the covenanted blessings of Israel. Hence circumcision became (at least after the departure from Egypt) a mark of separation by which God's people were distinguished from the heathen. It was a sign that God was with them, and that His Presence would be their constant comfort. Just in the same way, Moses, in the verse following my text, speaks of that of which circumcision was the sign, the promised Presence of God, as the great separating mark of Israel. Wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? Is it not in that Thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth? What a wonderful privilege! to be marked off before the world as God's people, as those among whom His Presence dwells. Can the treasury of God's blessings hold a higher, nobler gift? Christians, in that one word Emmanuel, "God with us," you see a greater

mystery, you receive a higher blessing, than patriarch or prophet, or Old Testament saint could conceive. In the finished work of the Incarnation of God the Son, in the fulness of the Pentecostal outpouring, you have been raised to heights they never dreamed of. Circumcision has passed away, and in Holy Baptism you are separated, far more than ever Israel was, separated not as a nation amongst whom God's Presence dwells, but as individual souls united in Holy Baptism with the Divine Manhood, sealed by the seal of the Lord in Confirmation, made one with Christ in the supreme mystery of His Love. No outward visible sign of cloud or fire, but the inward reality of regenerating grace is yours. God and man are no longer separate, as they were before Christ came. They are one in Him in Whom dwelleth all the fulness of God, and Who yet has taken our nature upon Him. Members of Christ, children of God, heirs of heaven, who shall separate us from God Himself? One thing, and one thing only—sin consciously committed and indulged in. This alone can rob men of the Divine Presence of Him Who promised to be with them always; for sin is the building up again of that separating wall which Christ destroyed.

You are entering on a New Year. You must of

necessity make your choice. Sin or Christ in you! but not both. They are polar opposites. Allow sin, little sins perhaps, to dwell in you, and the Divine Presence must depart. Seek to realise that Presence, and sin cannot live. The practice of the Presence of God—that is, the conscious realising of the fact that Christ is one with you, and you are one with Him—is the real remedy for every sin. It is the distinguishing mark of every saint of God that he realises God's Presence not merely in a Jewish, but in the higher Christian sense. So vivid is the realisation, that often holy men speak in terms that to us ordinary Christians seem hyperbolical and untrue. Read what S. John says about those who are born of God, and try and imagine what a real thing regenerating grace was to him. Read S. Paul, and see how that phrase, 'in Christ,' gives a tone to his theology; there is no condemnation, nothing that can separate from God, for those who are in Christ Jesus. 'I can do all things through Christ Who strengtheneth me.' Death is stingless, the grave is robbed of its victory, through Jesus Christ. There is no break in the chain which binds earth and heaven in one. We are Christ's, and Christ is God's. This knowledge of Christ's Presence in us is what gives the Christian courage to face the unknown future, conscious as he

is of all his manifold failures and shortcomings. Without that he is no better off than other men; he is ready to confess that life is not worth living. 'If Thy Presence go not with me, carry me not up hence.'

Men fear the unknown as children fear the dark. It is a natural, an instinctive fear. But darkness loses more than half its terrors for the child that feels round it a mother's arms; and the unknown future on which to-day we enter, we may approach with a holy indifference, if the Presence of our God is with us, and the everlasting arms around us. Not less solemn, not less awful, is life's uncertainty, so sadly brought home to us all as it has been in the last few days.[1] But in the realised sense of God's Presence we may go on our way. True, at a moment's notice we may be summoned hence,—called to go up higher,—but death touches not the union of the Christian with his God. True, we may be called to suffer and to sorrow. We will dare to recognise God's Presence still, when the cloud is resting on our tabernacle. But if the Presence goes not with us, how shall we dare to move? What if your cherished sins have robbed you of that Presence? What if in the great retrospect of the last day the Lord the Judge shall say, 'I separated you to be My own. I willed to be

[1] Tay Bridge accident.

with you for ever and ever. In the early days of good resolutions and First Communions I dwelt within you. Then you chose sin for your companion, and I was compelled in sorrow to leave the sin-stained temple'?

Dear friends, the year is very young yet, and you are full of new purposes and plans; you are rededicating yourselves to your God. Remember, the truest dedication of self is the recognition of the fact that you are already dedicated, in the realising the Presence of God within you, and in the steadfast purpose not to stir one step unless that indwelling Presence go with you. There, amid doubt and vicissitude and sorrow—there, come what may in this New Year, you have a fixed point, a constant quantity, among many variables.

> 'Change and decay in all around I see;
> O Thou Who changest not, abide with me.'

Here is rest in the midst of confusion; here is victory in the moment of seeming defeat; here is joy in the cloudy and dark days of sorrow. In Thy Presence, whether here or in heaven, or in the waiting world, there is fulness of joy. 'Without Thee all is dark; I have no guide.' 'If, then, Thy Presence go not with me, carry me not up hence;' but while that Presence is within me, come life, come death, come

fire or cloud, come success or failure as the world counts such things, I will fear no evil if Thou art with me. The God of the past is my guarantee for the great unknown future. He Who veiled His glory in the Incarnation that all His goodness might pass before me, this God is my God for ever and ever. He shall be my Guide, even unto death

# VII.

## ANSWERING GOD'S CALL.

*'When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'*—PSALM xxvii. 8.

AFTER this week we pass out of the range of Epiphany thoughts, and enter upon our solemn preparation for Lent. But before we do so, we may, perhaps, helpfully try and find some thought, some hint, as to the relation of God to man, and man to God, which will connect the one with the other.

We love to think of Epiphany as the complement of Christmas, the first unfolding of the far-reaching truth hidden in the manger of Bethlehem. The truth that God is made man carries with it the truth of the universality of Christianity. The truth which is so precious, and seems so natural to us, the truth which the early Christians so slowly embraced, follows directly from the fact that the Eternal Word was made flesh,—the truth, namely, that Christ is the

Saviour of man as man, and the old party walls which separate Jew and Gentile, bond and free, are, in the purpose and will of God, for ever done away. The first note of that truth is seen in this advent of the Magi, the offering up to Christ of the homage of the Gentile world. We love to dwell on that truth in all its far-reaching meaning. We love to think that the saints of the older covenant were saved by the Blood of Him Whom having not seen they loved. We believe, and surely our belief is a necessary consequence of what has been revealed to us of the nature of God and the world-wide efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, that in the great day of God there will be seen a great multitude, which no man can number, from East and from West, and from North and from South, saved every one of them by the merits of the Cross, saved by the Life and Death of Him Whom on earth, perhaps, they never knew and never loved. Certainly we believe that many who were never admitted to Christian privileges will share in the finished work of Christ, and that many an old philosopher or sage, whose life was spent in dimly feeling after God, will stand with us before the Throne and worship 'the Lamb.'

But such a belief, attractive as it is in an age like ours, when the reaction against a Calvinistic

theory of election and selection is strongly felt, brings with it its own special difficulties. For while the doctrine that Christ died for the whole human race is stated plainly in the Bible, the theory that all will in the end be saved has always been put aside by the Church of Christ as inconsistent with the ancient deposit of faith. We are left, therefore, to the conclusion that the universal efficacy of Christ's work is somehow limited, and limited by man himself, not by the conditions of time or place in which he lives. No one, I suppose, believes that the old world, which knew nothing even of the revelation of the Mosaic law, was by that fact excluded from a share in the Atonement; or that the heathen of our day, at home or abroad, are, simply because they are not Christian, to be without part or lot in the effects of Christ's work. The Athanasian Creed, of course, does not touch the case, but the second chapter of S. Paul's Epistle to the Romans *does*, and there the Apostle boldly states that if the Gentiles, having not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, 'these having not the law are a law unto themselves.' It is clear that while the Incarnation of the Eternal Word is the only full manifestation of God in His essential nature, which is Love, He yet reveals Himself in some way or other to every soul, and each is responsible

to God for the use he makes of that revelation. To the Jewish shepherds comes the angelic message; to the Eastern sages there appears a mysterious star. Yet in both God was speaking; and those who were far off, as well as those who were near, arose and went to Bethlehem, and knelt before the Son of God. To both God said, 'Seek ye My face'; and both were ready with the answer, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' We may get, then, from the Epiphany a hint as to the method which God uses in revealing Himself to man.

I. Here, then, is the first point we notice in the conditions under which God manifests Himself to man. There must be *a correspondence to grace,* a readiness to hear and to obey God's call. 'God leads those who are willing to be led;' and this is true whether of Christians or heathens. But what does it mean but that God treats men as free agents. He leads, He does not drive. He speaks by the voice of *conscience,* that universal revelation which tells man that right and interest are different things, and bids him throw himself upon his better self, and act up to what is highest and noblest in him. He speaks in *nature,* in its uniformities and marvellous adaptations, in its mysterious unity, which every new discovery of science serves but to bring into greater

prominence. In the world without, as in the secret recesses of man's nature, God left not Himself without a witness. Apart from what we call revealed religion, God speaks to man in nature and in conscience, the two witnesses which, if separated, seem to contradict each other. 'Seek ye My face;' and as men correspond to that voice, they are drawn nearer to Him Who speaks and learn more of His nature. But without such correspondence on the part of man no real manifestation of God is possible. The voices which once were real may be explained away. What is conscience but far-sighted selfishness, or, at least, a kind of tact by which we see what conduces to the greatest happiness of the greatest number. What is nature but a great struggle for existence, in which things gradually adapt themselves to the circumstances in which they live. 'I have swept the heavens with my telescope,' said one, 'and I have found no God.' No! for God is a God that hides Himself from such as these. If the shepherds had stayed to reason on the *à priori* probability of the angel's news, they might easily have persuaded themselves that it was but a delusion and hallucination, and plumed themselves on their higher criticism. The Magi might have explained away the Epiphany star. Perhaps it was but an unusual conjunction of

two planets; perhaps it was a deception after all, some curious optical delusion. Why take a long journey without demonstrative proof that the end would be worth the labour? But there was nothing of this. They arose, and followed the leading of the star.

II. And this brings us to another point, which is characteristic of God's manifestations to man. God *rarely, if ever, speaks to us except from behind a veil.* This is the way most consistent with God's natural dealings with us. He speaks by signs and hints, which loving and earnest hearts can read. There is always, so to say, a margin left for the exercise of that trusting love which we call faith. There is no demonstrative proof in the sphere of the supernatural, any more than in the sphere of the natural. We cannot prove the existence of God, or the divinity of Christ, or the inspiration of the Bible, by reasoning alone. If we could we should be Gnostics, not Christians; and that is why it is always possible for men to say that the evidences of Christianity are unconvincing. But the triumphs of faith are won not over reason, but in anticipation of reason. He that cometh to God must believe that He is,—but he cannot prove nor disprove that; and if he waits for such proof, he will never come at all.

Abraham, the father of the faithful, went forth at God's call, not knowing whither he went,—from Ur to Haran, from Haran to Canaan, and then to Mount Moriah. Was he irrational? Or did the end justify his faith? Cannot many of us bear testimony to the wisdom of obeying God's call, and hearing His voice when He bids us seek His face, though pride and prejudice, and trust in our own reasoning powers, were all leagued together against our better self, which fain would answer to that call, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek'?

God speaks from behind a veil. In that Divine brotherhood which He founded, He is ever present—in the Creeds and the New Testament, which He inspired His Church to give and guard for us, His truth is enshrined for ever. In the Sacraments, His own appointed channels of grace, He is ready to unite Himself with us. And yet men hesitate. They see the star, but it is only a star after all, and it may be a delusion. Why should they arise and go, leaving their own country, casting behind their backs all that is so attractive in the world, just to be led they know not whither, to bow before One they know not whom? And before they are aware the strange star is explained away. It no longer summons them to Bethlehem. They have risen above the superstition

of the Magi, but they never reach the manger of Bethlehem. Is that a fancy picture of what men do? If S. Paul sadly says of his people that he loved, 'The veil is on their hearts,' of how many of us are those words of a greater than S. Paul true? 'Ye search the Scriptures, but ye will not come to Me.' You are members of the Holy Church, which is My Body, and you see in it nothing but a human society, more or less adapted to the present state of things. You join in the highest act of worship, and for you it is only a bare memorial rite, which must not be too frequent, lest it lose its power. Again and again I call, 'Seek ye My face,' and there is no movement, no life in your religion. It is cold, dull, stereotyped, respectable. I listen in vain for the answer, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' And so the signs I gave you never lead you on to the thing signified. 'Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life.' Oh for the ready heart of the wise heathen, the simple-minded shepherds of Judea! They, at least, would arise and go if by chance they might see that strange thing, and kneel where the young Child was.

One practical thought seems to combine the two truths which we have noticed in God's manifestations of Himself to man. If it is true that God speaks to us by signs, not showing Himself plainly to us, but

bidding us to seek His face, and if these signs become meaningless, or are explained away, or are withdrawn by Him Who sent them, if we will not be led by them, it follows that we *cannot be too ready to obey the least signs of God's Will.* It is a saying of John Keble's, that 'the great difference between God's children and ordinary people is, that God's children are always ready to take God's hints.' Sometimes God does speak in terms that we can hardly misunderstand, when difficulties which we never dreamt of are thrown in the path of sin, or when the successful fraud or wrong brings misery in its train. Then we can hardly help feeling that we are fighting against God. But God's children do not wait for such things as these. To them God says, 'I will guide thee with Mine eye.' The bit and bridle for the horse and mule, but the Father's eye is the children's guide. Few, very few, are they who can appropriate the words of Dr. Newman's hymn, which we sang this morning. They speak the perfect self-surrender of a soul which has learned to trust God entirely:—

> 'I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
> Shouldst lead me on;
> I loved to choose and see my path; but now,
> Lead Thou me on.'

And yet each one of us will have made a great step forward in the religious life if the example of those

who were first led to the infant Saviour teaches us to be more constantly on the watch for the signs of God's leading. As a matter of fact, we make a kind of division of territory, if not a division of labour, between God and ourselves in the ordering of life. We talk of Providence, but we do not watch God's eye. I do not mean that we never go to God for counsel and direction. We do; but we mostly go too late, when we have made our own plans and they have failed, or when the complications of circumstances make us for a moment distrust ourselves.

Take such a common case as may happen to any of us in the practical guidance of our lives—some question of practice. What are we to do? We want to do what is right, but the 'pros and cons' seem so nearly balanced we cannot decide between them; and we think that this being so, it cannot matter very much which path we choose, especially if our intention is good. But what if there is an item in the account which we never added in? What if God's eye, which was on us all the time, though we had not time to look up, was leading us, guiding us, this way rather than that? Is it an indifferent matter still which path we choose? Is it a strange thing that, if we neglect to be guided by God, His eye is no longer over us for good?

Then take another case, a very common case, which the young have to decide. We talk of *choosing a vocation*; and we seem to think that we have before us several different lines of life from which we are to select. 'Choose our vocation.' Was ever such an abuse of terms? What is a vocation? That path in life, that one only path, to which God calls me, which He has laid down for me to walk in. Yes! I may choose it,—that is, I may accept it, or I may refuse it; but if I choose any other life, I do not choose my vocation, I choose that which is not my vocation. How many think of that? Yet it is obviously true to any one who believes in a God Who orders all things for us. We ask, What do we feel inclined to do? perhaps, What is it that we are by our education and antecedents fitted for? or, worse still, we wait for something to decide our wavering will; but I fear we rarely ask, What is the work which God created me to do in His world? what is the special vocation to which I am called? Too often the question is made one of mere utility. Where have I the best opening? which is the most paying life? Fathers and mothers, what are you teaching your children about vocation? Are you teaching them that God is calling each one of those you love to special work for Him, and their work and yours is to watch His eye, to *discover*, not

to *choose,* and, when the sign is given, to arise and go whither He shall lead.

Let me go a step lower in the social scale. God is no respecter of persons. In this matter of Divine guidance He draws no distinctions of birth, or education, or refinement, or wealth. His eye is leading all and each, bidding them seek His face in their several stations. I wonder how many of those who are called in God's providence to be servants ever really think of God's guidance when they are seeking for a new place. They want to better themselves, to raise themselves to such a level as they are qualified to reach, and they are right. But, then, do they often seek God's face, seek to be guided by His eye? Do they even realise that they are not moving in the world as mere machines, but God is saying to each one, 'Seek Me,' 'Seek My face.' He is trying to lead them, if they will be led. Is it not worth while to take God's call into the reckoning? Will your new place give you more opportunities of serving God? Is He leading you to it? There are some questions that at such a time are not likely to be forgotten. Is the question, What is God's leading? one of these? If not, can you wonder if the result is disappointment? if difficulties and discomforts, that you did not think of, arise? Believe me, the question of vocation

is the great question of every life. And it can be answered only in one way, by prayer for the Divine guidance, and a readiness to obey the slightest hints that God may give.

The author of the fourth Psalm had a method of settling difficult questions in the guidance of life which is only too rarely resorted to. 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.' Thus, and thus only, in the complexities of life in the world, can we direct our course aright. God is waiting to reveal Himself more perfectly to us, to teach us some new truth, to lead us nearer to Himself. But He cannot do this without our co-operation. He calls us, as once He called the Eastern astrologers, to worship the incarnate Lord. But the voice is clearer, for the Lord Himself has given us a sign. He Who has been revealed as Infinite Love is calling us to Himself: 'Seek ye My face.' I gave Myself for thee, My son; give Me thy heart. Who of us is ready to give to God the answer that He waits for, 'My heart saith unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek'?

# VIII.

## WEARINESS IN WELL-DOING.

*'Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.'*—Gal. vi. 9.

The Christian life is constantly represented to us in the Bible as a struggle, a race, a warfare, all of which terms have this in common, that they imply continued and sustained effort. The beginning of conscious religion is a choice, a choice of God and His service: but the whole of the rest of our lives is a struggle to hold fast to the choice which we have made. And I think a very little experience is enough to teach us that the choice is far easier than the perseverance in the course chosen. There is a very celebrated allegory told by one of the pupils of the philosopher Socrates, and called the 'choice of Hercules,' which will illustrate what I mean. Hercules is represented as a young man just entering on the journey of life, with a mind ready to be influenced by the first accidental circumstance. As he goes his way a woman

meets him, dressed in gaudy colours, and with a bold and wanton face. She tells the wanderer that her name is Pleasure, though enemies call her Vice, and if he will follow her she will give him an easy life, and all that man can desire—pleasure, wealth, honour. What more attractive offer could be made to a young man entering on life's way? But while Pleasure speaks a new figure enters on the scene—quiet and modest in her look and dress, and with something of sadness in her look. 'O Hercules,' she said, 'I have none of these things to offer; I will tell you the truth and conceal nothing. Everything worth having is got by toil. If you want men to speak well of you, you must sacrifice yourself to do them good; if you would be reckoned a patriot, you must be ready to die for your country; if you would reap a good harvest, you must plough and sow; if you would win the victory in athletic contests, you must train and discipline yourself. My name is Virtue, and I offer you real happiness, but only if you are content to toil, and persevere unto the end.' 'See,' broke in Vice, 'see what a hard life she invites you to; I will lead you by a short cut to happiness.' Virtue replies, showing how real and lasting is the happiness of the holy and the pure, while the pleasure of the vicious is but a bitterness disguised. And then the youthful Hercules makes

his choice, and chooses the life of toil and hardship which leads to real happiness, and boldly spurns the present pleasure of sin which Vice so temptingly described.[1]

Such is the far-famed allegory of Prodicus, and it is true as far as it goes, but as I suppose most of us would feel, it breaks down in this: The real difficulty of the choice between God and the world is not the first resolution, but the holding fast to the resolution we have made. No young man or young woman entering upon life says, I will choose Vice and live what is called a life of pleasure. There is far too much of good left in human nature, whatever Calvinists may say, to make that possible. The Devil knows human nature too well to tempt us thus. But hundreds and hundreds who are now living vicious or Godless lives began with a right choice, determined to do right, but, alas! they never counted the cost; they did not know that the choice was the beginning, not the end, of the great struggle, and so little by little they fell away from God and holiness; they grew weary in well-doing, and fell into the Devil's snare. They did not persevere, they did not fight to the end, they did not keep unwearied watch. They did not know, perhaps, as so many people

[1] Ap. Xen. *Mem.* ii. 1.

do not, or will not know now, that to follow Christ, to be His soldier, is to be fighting till their life's end.

Perseverance, the subject which I have chosen for to-day, is a far rarer virtue than people think even in worldly matters. Perseverance to the end, in the great fight of faith, is a grace which God gives. Only we should be quite wrong if we supposed that the power to endure to the end, or the grace of final perseverance, as people sometimes miscall it, is given to some and not to others. It is part of our heritage as baptized children of God. Then grace is given sufficient for our childish struggles and temptations, power to resist them if we will; and in Confirmation, and in the ever-renewed blessings of Holy Communion, God giveth more grace, power to resist still greater temptations, and in the hour of danger to stand firm. It is, I suppose, because men do not know how hard it is to persevere against the attacks of a watchful enemy, that they so little value the means of grace which God has appointed. But are we as persevering as we fancy? Look back at some period in your life when, from some cause or other, you felt God was with you, and honestly resolved to keep His Presence near you. Is it with you now as then? If not, is it God Who has got tired of you, or you who have become weary in well-doing?

Suppose we are of those who have made a right choice, have been 'converted,' as some would say; that is, led by God's grace to submit ourselves to the guidance of the love which has been round us ever since we were born, and which claimed us as God's own in Holy Baptism, and to turn away from a bad or a careless life. Well, thank God, we have made a good beginning. Perhaps our conversion was a great wrench, a breaking away from bad and hurtful associations, and a compelling ourselves to some things which were distasteful. Is the conflict won? Wait for the end. You have met the enemy, and by the grace of God you have beaten him. Henceforward your life on earth will be a series of conflicts, unless you grow weary and faint. Persevere, and you will know why the life of Christ's followers is called a struggle or a race. You will begin to understand why the most experienced veterans are most cautious and circumspect; you will begin to know that you may not despise any help that God has given you. All the exultation and satisfaction which you felt at your first victory will have gone,—given way to the silent earnestness of him whose every muscle is strained in his efforts to win the victory. No loud shouts yet, no platform speeches, no vivid autobiographies, no singing in the streets. The real Salvation Army marches silently. No

confident boastings yet; if you boast now, you will be weary before the end is reached. If you fancy your first victory is decisive, the least reverse afterwards will seem to you like a defeat. Those who watch for the souls of men, and scrutinise narrowly the signs of the good soldier of Christ Jesus, are always anxious when they see much confidence. They who begin by expecting too much often grow weary and achieve nothing.

We know, most of us, how the first trials of our endurance come. We are tempted to reconsider our first choice, or to think that our first resolution was hasty, and something more of a compromise would have been wise. That was what the Galatian Christians, to whom S. Paul was writing, had done. They had received the good news of Jesus Christ with joy and gladness, were very zealous and earnest, as it seemed; but their zeal destroyed itself, wore itself out, till their father in the faith was compelled to write that sharp and sad rebuke: 'I marvel that ye are so soon removed to another gospel. O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?' They had gone back, by adding Jewish rites to their Christianity, and before they knew it they had left their first love. They got weary of well-doing, weary of the faith which they had so gladly embraced. They did run well, too well

at first, and so they wearied and broke down before the race was won. So it is again and again with the newly converted. They do not do that which, in worldly efforts, we should call economising their strength. They put it all out at first, and it wears itself out. They mean to be so holy and so different from what they have been, quite forgetting that the life of grace in the soul must grow by gradual growth. And then when the first failure comes, as come it must, they are disappointed;—their pride is hurt, their fancied strength has broken down, they are not the saints they meant to be, but only ordinary men, and they grow weary. So little result is not worth the effort.

Exactly this same tendency we must all have noticed in another sphere; I think clergymen and district visitors, and Sunday-school teachers know it well. All who try to do any special work for God, according to the greatness of the task undertaken and the zeal with which it is entered upon, feel very soon grievous and bitter disappointment. They are tempted to grow weary and faint in well-doing; they began with such earnest self-devotion, they were going to work God's work, and they expected great results; at least they thought people would understand that they were engaged in well-doing. And then they

soon find that things do not go as well as they hoped. There is so little visible result. Those whom they hoped they were helping Godwards break away, and their past efforts seem wasted. And, worse than want of the expected success, they find their very motives challenged or misunderstood. They feel like Moses when in his zeal and anxiety to help his fellow-countrymen he thought that they would have understood that God had chosen him to be their deliverer. And he was shocked and disappointed and disheartened that those he was trying to help should turn round upon him and say, 'Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?' And as I have said, the disappointment and weariness when it comes is great in proportion to the zeal with which the work was undertaken. Is there not an explanation which is at least possible? Perhaps what we thought zeal covered a good deal of self-confidence, and God would teach us that it is not *we* who work *for Him* but *He* Who works *by us.* At all events, visible success is never a trustworthy test. The promise is certain, the time is left in God's hand—'In due time we shall reap if we faint not.' And this due time is God's time, not ours. The moment we begin to ask ourselves,—and which of us has not done so?—'Am I doing any good; had I not better give up the effort altogether?' we may be quite

sure that we are bringing in human tests of heavenly work. Some one[1] has compared our undertakings and purposes to that great image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. The head was of fine gold,—so are the beginnings of most men's plans. Nothing is too costly, no labour too great. The breast and the arms are of silver. Interest begins to slacken—their views of possible success are modified, they have less exalted notions of what they are going to do. Lower still the silver has become brass—bright as the golden head, but not real, not genuine. They go on with the work, and it looks the same, but it is brass, not gold. The feet are part iron and part clay. Dreary ending to a work so nobly begun—what a picture of imperfection!—a gradual deterioration, gold first, clay last. Such is the spiritual life of many who did run well. Such is the well-doing of many who started with high purposes to work for God. And now their life is jaded, cold, half-hearted. 'Weary in well-doing' sums up their interior as well as their exterior life.

Now, I think a few very simple and commonplace truths may help us greatly in gaining the grace of perseverance, or rather in using the grace which God gives to each to enable him to persevere. We, most of us, begin by thinking we are going to achieve so

[1] Baring-Gould: *Sermons to Children.*

much. The men who have turned the world upside down are the men who are the last to know how much they have accomplished. 'The empty vessel makes the greatest sound' is a well-known truth. Let us be content to fill a little place in God's great world. It is much better to fill a little place well than to grow weary in misdirected efforts after greatness. When we are fit for it, and the time is come, the Lord will bid us 'go up higher.' God's work in nature is a model for us in our work for Him. Everywhere we see growth, a gradual going on from the little to the great. Yet it is very hard to practise in our lives such a commonplace truth as that we must begin at the beginning. Most of us do not like beginnings; we want to begin in the middle or at the end; we want to make a show. We might as well try and transplant a full-grown tree. If we attempt it, it will look very grand at first, but soon it will wither and die, and stand the mere skeleton of what once it was. We should have been wiser if we had been content with a young sapling that would grow bigger and stronger year by year. Its progress may be slow, but it is sure —like the life of God in him who is content to grow in grace, or like the success of those who, in well-doing, grow not weary, though for many days no fruit of their work is seen.

'Be not weary in well-doing.' Remember, disappointments and checks are as much from God as success is. Be more ready to trust what is gradual than what is sudden. The gourd which springs up in a night withers in a night. Try and measure progress, whether in your own soul's life or in your work for God among others, not by feelings but by facts, not by words but by the life. And remember that all real lasting good comes after much effort, silently and, as we think, slowly. The bread cast upon the waters may not be seen for many days, or we may seem, like the Apostolic fishermen, to have toiled all the night and taken nothing, just at the very hour which is God's due time and He Himself is ready to bless our labour with success.

'Be not weary in well-doing.' Think of the greatest work that ever human eyes beheld. Think of the hidden life of Nazareth, think of the three years of patient preaching amidst abuse and insult and contempt, ere the Divine Worker's hour was come, and He could raise His eyes in death and say, 'It is finished; Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit.'

# IX.

## GOD'S CONSTANT PRESENCE.[1]

'*As thy days, so shall thy strength be.*'—DEUT. xxxiii. 25.

THEY are the closing words of that wonderful blessing with which Moses, the servant of God, blessed the tribe of Asher, and they are the very climax of his blessing, the most precious jewel in the crown. Other blessings had Asher, great in their degree. His shall be the joy of a happy parent, whose wife is as a fruitful vine, and his children like olive branches round about his table. 'Let Asher,' said the patriarchal leader, 'be blessed with children.' His shall be the prosperity of one whose garners are full with all manner of store, and whom his neighbours and friends look up to with respect and love. 'Let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil.' His shall be the wealth of the earth. 'Thy shoes shall be iron and brass.' But there is a higher blessing yet in store for this favoured tribe. For all these

[1] Preached in Whitehall, February 1888.

things that have been promised have, as it were, another side, a sad side. But the final blessing stands alone. 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.' It is the gathering up into one of all God's promises to His people for life and in death, following them through all the changes and chances of this mortal life, giving to those who understand the greatness of the blessing a holy indifference to those things which most men desire or fear.

Leaving now, as I think we are justified in doing, the special application, let us look back and see how this promise has been fulfilled in our own history. It will at least help us to realise more fully than most of us do, that in all the different lives we see and hear about, there is yet a strange equality when we regard these lives from a religious point of view.

I. And first, looking back on our past lives, be they long or short, the first thing that will strike us will be the great number of days which were neither very happy nor very sad, days that passed by with nothing special to mark them, each like the one that went before, colourless days we might call them if we were writing our own life's history, when the routine of life went on in its accustomed way and nothing seemed to rouse a special sense of joy or sadness,—not wasted days, but simply uneventful days. What are we to

say of these? Surely these were the days God gave us that in them we might do life's work—I mean the work which every living soul must do for itself. And the health, and the comfort, and the ease, and that which made those days so little worthy of note, were the strength God gave for doing that work. He willed that we should be preparing then, in time of ease, while the evil days were yet far off, and the years in which we are compelled wearily to admit that we have no pleasure in them. What if, after all, in spite of the zeal and regularity with which we went about our ordinary business, what if we were wasting those days, receiving God's strength for God's work, and spending it all on ourselves? Ah! none of us can say that it has not been so, that these colourless days, which, remember, make up the greater part of the life of each one of us, were not treated by us as if they were meant for do-nothing days, days which would come and go and leave us as we were. What would some not give to live over again those unnoticed days when they have gone and old age or sickness robs us of our power to work. We look back upon them then, as the days of strength, when we might have done something towards our life's work, and they are gone unnoticed, uncounted, and unknown, save by Him Who all that time was giving us strength

which we never used, for a work which we hardly thought of.

In the case of many of us, this portion of our lives which so often slips away unheeded is given still. We may have many such days in store, but however many they are, they are but enough for the work to be done in them. These days with their petty routine, 'the trivial round, the common task,' are God's working days, and our working days, too, when the business of our soul's life must be done, when our Creator bids us to remember Him before the evil days come, and the years in which we take no pleasure.

II. But besides these ordinary, uneventful, and, as it seems, colourless days, we can most of us remember days marked with a white stone, days which we look back to now as distinguished from all the rest, when some great success was achieved, or some exceptional blessing was given, or some dreaded ill was spared us, when the sickness which threatened the life of a loved one was removed, or when in our ordinary business things were strangely prosperous, and people envied our luck, and we could not help wondering in the secret of our hearts why things had happened so. Surely in those bright hours God was giving you strength according to your day, inviting you, calling

you, leading you, by the oft-checked feeling of gratitude, to look up to the Giver of all good things. New opportunities were given you then for rendering to God His own, an enlarged sphere of usefulness and charity towards your less favoured brethren; everything seemed to bid you be full of love to God and man, and show your thankfulness for the blessings you had received. Tell me, you who can recall such days as these, what is your own experience? Did you yield to that Divinely-inspired gratitude, and use the strength God gave? Did you lay by of your goods as God had prospered you? Did your charity keep pace with your prosperity? Nay, was the feeling of thankfulness ever allowed to influence and shape your life and actions? Or are you obliged to confess with shame that the first feeling of thankfulness was short-lived indeed; that the desire for more seemed to come naturally, and the prosperity which at first surprised you came as a mere matter of course, and your only wonder was that it was not greater. And if the temporary prosperity came to an end,—if God, seeing that you would not be drawn to Him by blessings, took the misused prosperity from you, can you recall nothing of anger and disappointment, almost the feeling that God had not dealt fairly by you? Again and again this is the case. In our days of prosperity

God gives us special means to use for our soul's health, and we misuse them to our soul's harm, and then murmur that God withdraws that which we would not voluntarily render unto Him.

If God gives, as He does give, special strength in these prosperous days, the devil has his special temptations in them to draw us away from God, and make us turn His blessings into a curse. Need is there that each one of us, whether as individuals in our day of prosperity, or as members of a nation highly blessed of God, should raise to Him that sad Litany suffrage, 'In all time of our wealth, Good Lord, deliver us.'

But there is yet another class of days which we can most of us remember. They are the days which have written themselves deep in our memory. They are the dark and cloudy days, days of anxiety, bereavement, sickness, poverty, disappointed hopes, sadness, weariness, or something which, at least in the first flow of sorrow, made life seem not worth the having. What shall we say of these days? What of God's promise here? Surely it is in these sad days that we learned most truly the length, and breadth, and depth of the words, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.' If we could have seen the dark cloud gathering, we should have been ready to pray that we might

never live to see it break. It would be too great for us to bear, the hope of a lifetime shattered, the loved one round whom every affection clung taken away, the desire of our eyes removed by a stroke, or the circumstances of our life changed in a moment. And yet, looking back to those days, how wonderfully supported we were in what seemed unsupportable. Just when the heaviest strain came, a strength, that we never knew we had, seemed to be brought out. We could not understand it then, but now, in the light of God's word, we can see the truth, that the loving Father ordered well for us, and that our strength was proportioned to our day.

Ay, and a greater truth has many a one learned to see in those cloudy and dark days. With what to the world will seem a strange paradox, he can say, 'It is good for me that I have been in trouble.' When gloom gathered round all earthly things, he has seen a rift in the darkening cloud, and beyond it the glory of heaven, which he had never seen before. It is as if he had toiled and strained to reach the summit of some lofty mountain, up through the thickening mist, till he had passed beyond it, and, bathed in a sea of glory, he beheld the mountain-tops. Beneath him lies the dull and heavy mist, darkening the scenes of earth and bathing them with tears, but above him all

is bright and radiant with a heavenly glory. What is now the sorrow and the weariness compared to that glimpse of heaven. 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us.'[1] So wonderful is the compensation of God's providence; so strangely is the promise fulfilled, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.'

Something, too much perhaps, should we have to meditate upon as we recalled God's dealing with us in the day of temptation. Here, too, we should be tempted beforehand to say, 'It is too great for me to bear. I must sink under it.' And yet God has given us strength according to the day. The devil's power is not omnipotence. God is watching over the tempted one, sending angels to strengthen in the hour of fiercest conflict. When the will is ready to sin and yield to the tempter's power, God in His mercy has withheld the opportunity to sin, and when the opportunity was given, by some strange accident, as it seemed, the inclination was not present. No man ever yet yielded to temptation because he had not strength to resist it. In the fight with sin it is only the coward falls,—never the brave man, for on his side is the strength of omnipotence. We think

[1] Rom. viii. 18.

that when we sinned it was because we could not help it. It is false. 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.'[1] In the day of temptation the promise fails not, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.'

And what shall we say of the day of death? Have you not seen that sight which laughs to scorn the theories of a materialistic philosophy? Have you not seen the worn-out frame unable, almost unwilling, to battle longer with the King of Terrors, lying in helpless waiting for the call to come, and yet strong with a superhuman power, the dimmed eye piercing to the very Throne of God, the weak one clinging with a giant's strength to 'a hand we cannot see,' the ear deaf to all earthly voices drinking in those blessed words, 'When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee,' 'beneath thee the everlasting arms.' 'God is faithful.' 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.'

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 13.

# X.

## PRAYER NOT INDIVIDUAL BUT SOCIAL.[1]

'*And He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father, Which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy Will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.*'—S. Luke xi. 2.

It is not a new thought, but it is a true one, that the Lord's Prayer, the model of all Christian prayers, exactly reverses the natural order which man adopts in drawing near to God. And it is a part of that reversal of the natural order which characterises the whole of God's revelation in Christ. It teaches us never to think of ourselves, or at least only of ourselves as members in the family of God, and it teaches us to think of God before all. Hence the first three petitions relate to God, the last four to ourselves, and even then not to our individual, abstract, isolated selves. God and His Glory first; man and his needs last: that is the Divine order for

[1] Preached in Whitehall, April 1888.

man's prayers. 'Hallowed be Thy Name; Thy kingdom come; Thy Will be done,' before ever we think of ourselves, our present needs, our past sins, our future dangers. At first this seems strange, for does not prayer, as we commonly understand it, mean asking for something we want? Yes; but Christ's prayer teaches us what we ought to want most. Just in the same way the Ten Commandments give us the true order of duty—our duty to God first, then our duty to man; just in the same way the Creed carries us up at once to the great truths of the Trinity and the Incarnation before ever we come to those things, which might seem most near to us, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, the great blessings given to us by God through Christ in His Holy Church. The Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer thus give the true order of *faith*, the true order of *duties*, the true order of *devotion*.

But it is in prayer most of all that we feel the violence put upon our natural tendency. Surely we might argue in prayer we are right to begin with ourselves, and the prayers of most of us *do*, I fear, so begin. An old writer quaintly says, 'Most people's "Our Father" begins with "Give us this day."' And it is very rarely, indeed, that you hear an extempore

prayer which follows the Divine and not the human, order. In one chapter in the Bible we have two prayers given us, both extempore, both invented by man, very different from one another, yet both very different from the Lord's Prayer too. The one is the Pharisee's prayer: 'God, I thank Thee I am not as other men are'; the other, the prayer of the publican: 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.' Very different they were, very different the judgments which Christ passed upon them; but in this point they were like one another, and both different from the prayer Christ gave—they both began with self. The proud, self-righteous Pharisee began by thinking how *good* he was; the poor penitent could think of nothing but how *bad* he was. But Christ's prayer suggests a different order—God first, His honour and glory, and then man and the needs of man.

Do not misunderstand the distinction which I am trying to draw. There are times when prayer *must* begin with the individual and his own need, must cry aloud for pardon, for the removal of some great separating cloud of sin, or for the gift of some necessary grace. The publican was not wrong, but right to pray as he did. Only this is not the *type* of the Christian's prayer, not the prayer of the child of God regenerate by Holy Baptism, and drawing near to his

Father. The life of the Christian from baptism till death is a continual mortifying of sin, a continual advance in grace—that is, if I may use the word, God's *theory* of the regenerate life. In practice there are falls many and perhaps grievous, some even *deadly*; and a special disease requires a special remedy. But for many it is still true that 'He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet.'[1] That is why I think the order of prayer for the Christian soul sets the prayer for forgiveness so late.

But this Divine order of prayer rests upon a principle. Christ's model Prayer reverses the order which we should naturally adopt, because *it assumes a new view of prayer*, a view quite different from the common one. For it seems as if we had carried within the sacred pale of Christianity views which are hardly to be distinguished from those of heathens.

We commonly assume that prayer is an *individual* thing. And if you took the trouble to examine the different criticisms which from time to time are passed on our Prayer Book, you would find that nearly all start from this assumption. Sometimes it has occurred to me that the truest test of a Churchman is to ask, 'What does he think of prayer? Is public or private prayer the truest and most typical

[1] S. John xiii. 10.

form?' A great many people think of public or common prayer as if it were made up out of all the prayers of those who join in it, and they often complain that its confessions are not minute enough, its prayers for grace not special enough, its thanksgiving and praise not sufficiently adapted to the habits of those who offer them. And such people soon get careless about the daily service: so few people come to it, it is hardly worth keeping it up; and their conclusion follows rightly, only their first assumption is wrong. Prayer is not, in its true nature, an individual thing, but a common thing. Enter into your chamber if you will, and shut your door, and pray in secret to the Father—alone with God, alone with your own sins and cares and desires—that you may pour them all out before the Throne; and as you open your lips in what you call the Lord's Prayer, its first word gives the lie to that theory that prayer is an individual thing: 'Our Father.' Then I am not alone; I am one with the members of that family; my weak prayer is caught up into the great stream of prayer that goes up for ever from the waiting Church. 'Our' Father. Yes; the strength of my prayer is that it is *not mine*; that the moment I fall upon my knees I am no longer an individual man or woman talking to God, but a member of the family

of God, a sharer in that human nature which Christ has carried to the right hand of God. On our knees we are never alone, never isolated, never merely individuals. That is the wonderful comfort of prayer. We may feel lonely in sorrow, lonely in sin, and we can go to God. Yes; but if we are lonely in prayer, what then? If we cannot pray; if, as sometimes happens to God's dear ones, even the power of praying seems denied, what then? Why; it is then that I learn what prayer is. It is not *my* prayer or *your* prayer, but the prayer of the one family to the one Father, in which each is praying for all, and all for each. Bishop Hall puts this truth very beautifully, when he says: 'There is a certain spiritual traffic of piety betwixt all God's children, wherein they exchange prayers with each other. Am I weak in spirit and faint in my supplications? I have no less share in the prayers of the holiest suppliants than in my own: while there is life in their devotions, I cannot go away unblessed.' [1]

The belief in the Communion of Saints is that which gives life and force to prayer, and comfort and confidence to those who pray. *On my knees I cannot be alone.* My prayer, weak, feeble, helpless as it is, is organically united with the prayers of the whole

[1] *Christ Mystical*, vii. 32.

Church. The prayers of all who are yet toiling on as we are; the prayers of those, our dear ones in the waiting world, the prayers of Saints and Martyrs under the Altar, the prayers of Angels and Archangels and the Company of Heaven, the prayers of Him Who ever liveth to make intercession for us. We are all members of one body, because sharing in the same supernatural life which began in Baptism.

Yes; you all belong to an association for intercessory prayer. The badge of it is the sign of the Cross, which was signed on your foreheads in Baptism. And every prayer that you have breathed since has had in it something of intercession, your private prayers as well as the public prayers of the Church in which you joined. You were made members of a Divine society, a body so delicately framed together that no part can be touched with disease without the mischief vibrating through the whole, and no new strength can be gained which does not spread to each part in its degree, filling the whole with new energy. Just because you are Christians you are already members in a great family of prayer, which nothing can resolve into an aggregate of mere individuals.

And an association for special prayer for a special part of God's work can only mean the centralising and concentrating of our thoughts, at the time of

intercession, on some members in the family who are specially bound to us, or specially need our prayers; just as it is the making definite and concrete and real that which is already implied in the very act of prayer. 'Our Father': and have we not all one Father? And are there not some who seem so far off, almost on the edge of that circle of prayer? And we want to remind ourselves of their true place, to keep them very near us in prayer, because in some ways they are so far from us. We are not adding anything, or doing as it were a little work of supererogation out of sheer love to God. It is only that we want to make explicit to ourselves what is already hidden in the prayer, 'Thy kingdom come,'—nay, in the very opening words, 'Our Father.'

And God in His goodness makes this easy for us, drawing us out of ourselves by all the sweet sympathies of love, and then by the tender ties of friendship. Is it to stop there? Suppose, just as the result of our thoughts at this season, we were to try and make that prayer, 'Thy kingdom come,' a more real, concrete, definite thing by mapping out for ourselves a little scheme of special intercession. Of course we pray daily for our relations and friends, and specially for those who are in special need. But there are others in God's family we hardly think of.

Suppose each day in the week we were to try and make our prayers more real by taking a special group each day outside the circle of those we know. Suppose each Sunday when we knelt to join in the Holy Eucharist we were to remember the heathen who know not God, and those brave men who in loneliness and isolation are working for the spread of God's kingdom. What would those Christian priests and laymen do if they could not fall back upon that great power of intercessory prayer which the Church offers up to God, and in which it is our privilege to join?

And then another day we might let our intercessions concern our parish, and the various agencies for good at work in it. Or we might use that wonderful prayer out of the Accession Service, and pray specially for the unity of that Family which selfishness and sin and the love of pre-eminence has torn asunder. Or, again, we might pray for those baptized children of the family of God who are living in open sin, or for those whose lives are saddened by doubts which they cannot solve. And I think we should find a place for those who have no one specially to pray for them, and those who never pray for themselves.

It would be very easy and very helpful for those of us who want to make our prayers real to sketch out

some such scheme of special intercession. Only we must remember that it is not adding intercession to prayer, but making prayer what it ought to be, bringing out, clearly and definitely, that intercessory character which is implicit in true prayers. God reveals His Will to those who know how to pray. It may be He has for some of you a vocation yet undreamed of in a work you have thought little about. There are no accidents in God's world. Anyhow, I am sure of this: we shall realise the Divine power more fully, and hold better communion with God, if we have definite objects of prayer external to ourselves. We have to avoid two things in prayer—*selfishness* and *vagueness*. We correct the one when we understand that all real prayer has an element of intercession in it. We correct the other when we fix our thoughts on the special needs of others. The more we pray for them that they may be better, may be more fit for the work of God, the more shall we have done by God's grace to make ourselves better. Those words are worth remembering: 'If we have a real purpose in our prayers, we shall get a real purpose in our lives.'

# XI.

## EFFORT NECESSARY FOR SPIRITUAL PROGRESS.[1]

'*So run, that ye may obtain.*'—1 Cor. ix. 24.

There is at first sight something of a contradiction in the teaching of the Epistle and Gospel for Septuagesima Sunday. I say 'at first sight,' because a more thoughtful examination of the two will not only remove the contradiction, but will teach us a truth which, in its fulness, we might not otherwise have seen.

In the Epistle S. Paul is speaking of the need of discipline, self-restraint, temperance, in running the heavenly race. Just as those who were training for the great athletic contests of Greece submitted to hardship, denied themselves things which they liked, adopted a set diet, and committed themselves to the trainer's orders; so he who is to win the incorruptible

[1] Preached on Septuagesima Sunday.

crown which is set before the Christian must be temperate in all things, must adopt a rule of life which implies discipline and self-denial, must be content to lay aside his private views and learn from those who before him have run well and gained the victory. He must keep under the body, must train himself to earnestness, definiteness, unweariness, concentration of effort, if he is to win the prize. All this we easily understand so long as we think of the effort and the self-discipline needed alike in the earthly and the heavenly race.

But then S. Paul seems to make the comparison hold in another point which is much more difficult. 'Know ye not,' he says, 'that they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?' It looks as if there were competition in the heavenly race; as if victory or defeat depends somehow on what others do. And yet we are sure this cannot be so; and when we turn to the Gospel we see how false such an interpretation would be. In the parable of the labourers in the vineyard we have the case of men summoned at different stages in their lives to work for the Master; and when the time of payment comes they are astonished and discontented at the unfairness, as it seems to them, of the principle on which their work is paid. It is not that the Master has not kept faith

with them, but that He has only given what He promised. Their complaint is, in fact, that either the others ought to have had less, or they ought to have had more. To put all on a level seemed to clash with the principle of distributive justice. 'They murmured against the good man of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.'

If we turn from the parable to the spiritual meaning, we come upon a problem which has most likely suggested itself to most of us. Does God deal in this way with men? Is there no proportion observed between man's actions here and his state after death? Is the sinner who by God's great mercy is 'saved' when it is almost too late, to be put on a level with the saint whose life has been lived to God, and whose every energy has been consecrated to His service? If so, we can hardly wonder at men putting off repentance till the last moment, so as to make the most (as it is called) of both worlds. Certainly, human nature being what it is, those labourers would not have worked all day if they had known that the last comers would be treated just the same as the first.

Let us now put the two suggested difficulties side by side.

1. S. Paul speaks of the Christian life as a race in which all run, but only some receive the prize; and if the analogy is to hold in all points, this suggests not only that the prize depends on the success of our efforts, but that there is at least some element of competition in the case. 'Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may attain.'

2. The parable in the Gospel speaks as if in the vineyard of God there is no difference made between those who worked hard all day long and those who only worked for an hour. 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? I will give unto this last even as unto thee.'

The practical bearing of these questions is obvious. In the one case too much emphasis seems to be laid upon our own efforts; in the other, what we do in the matter seems not only relatively, but absolutely unimportant, and we are tempted to lounge about in the market-place of the world with the intention of going into the vineyard at the eleventh hour. And, strangely enough, the effect on conduct is much the same in both cases. If a theory of arbitrariness in God's bestowal of His gifts leads to 'wretchlessness of most unclean living,' the belief that everything depends upon ourselves is just as likely to drive men

to despair and hopelessness, and at last a reckless indifference in moral and religious matters.

Can we, then, remembering that one-sided truth is error, and that in this question as in many others a dangerous and even deadly heresy has been the result,—can we, I say, put the teaching of the Epistle and the Gospel together, and get from them a whole truth instead of two halves? It seems to me that we can, and that by doing so we get this result.

Salvation—or, if we may use a popular phrase to guard against ambiguity, final salvation—always presupposes moral effort, and yet we may not think of it as 'wages,' but as the gift of God.

Many of you will remember how the same difficulty is discussed in the moral region and in the interests of morality by Aristotle in the *Ethics*.[1] The problem he proposes is this:—Is perfect well-being for man won by man or given to man? Is it earned by a good life, or is it *θεόσδοτον*, the gift of God? His answer is hesitating enough on the theological side, though we are told that if anything can claim to be God's gift, happiness can. But Aristotle is clear that in any case it cannot be a capricious or arbitrary thing; it must be given to man as man, though only fully attained by those who strive to live virtuously

[1] Arist. *Ethics*, i. ix.

—that is to say, those who develop their natural capabilities according to the law of the highest known good.

The words, 'So run, that ye may obtain,' seem hardly consistent with this, for they seem to make the end a prize worked for and won, and therefore claimed of right by those who receive it. But there is an ambiguity in the English version which does not exist in the Greek, and which the revisers have tried to remove. 'So run, that ye may obtain,' does not mean, 'Run in such a way that ye may obtain,' 'Make the winning the prize the measure of your effort.' It means, 'Run like an athlete, with all his eagerness, his concentration of effort, his self-distrust, even his fear of failure, if ye would receive the crown of life.' 'Even so run,' the revisers translate.

S. Paul, then, is emphasising the fact that moral effort is a necessary condition of receiving the Christian's prize. And here, at least, all our moral experience witnesses to the wisdom of his advice. 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous.' And to be holy, to do righteousness, implies a constant striving. Relax your effort for a moment, and you have lost ground. In the moral world, not to go forward is to fall behind. Is there not a picture of that truth in the

organic world outside us? What seems more natural than growth? Consider the lilies: they toil not; they spin not; yet how beautiful they are! Look at the fowls of the air: they have no storehouses, as men have; God feedeth them! And yet, as our Lord knew (did He not create all things that are?)—as He knew, if these plants and birds teach us a lesson of *trust*, they teach us no less surely a lesson of *effort*. They must fight for life and growth; they, like men, are struggling for self-emancipation, though the life they struggle for is the life of existence, while man is struggling for a nobler life—the life of moral freedom, which is the life of God. The likeness of the Christian to the runner lies in this matter of effort—earnest, unwearying, forward-reaching effort. There is no element of competition in the matter. If he loses the prize it will not be because others have run better, but because he has not run as well as he could, struggled as earnestly as he could, aspired as high as he could. He need not look at others. Nothing is more dangerous than to compare ourselves among ourselves in the spiritual life. We may not even look back, for to look back over the ground we have won is to lose precious moments in the race; we must forget those things that are behind, and *press forward*, using to the utmost all the light, all

the strength, all the gifts which God has given us, to enable us to rise above the natural to the freedom of the spiritual.

But of course that implies the belief that God's gifts are given, though in different degrees, to all; that the light of conscience and the power to strive belong to man as a moral being, apart from, and outside the revelation of, Christianity. We understand how God, as a just God, will judge every man according to his deeds—according, that is, to his faithfulness to the light he had. However much heathen may differ from Christian, however wide may be the differences which separate heathen religions from one another in truth or falseness, it puts no strain upon our moral nature to believe that among those who are saved by the Cross of Christ there will be many who on earth never knew Him, but earnestly and nobly struggled to realise all the truth they knew.

But it is different when we come to think of differences among Christians—those, I mean, who know the revelation of Christ. Are we to suppose that the penitent thief and the saint of God, the man who was saved at the eleventh hour and those who have borne the burden and heat of the day, are to be put on the same level? Does not this jar upon our notions of justice, as it did upon those of the discontented

labourers in the parable? In fact, if the converted sinner is 'saved,' and the saint who lived for God and men is 'saved,' is not salvation, or the hope of it, dangerous to morals? Or, to put the difficulty more pointedly, is not the forgiveness of sins in itself immoral, and likely to paralyse real efforts after goodness? If 'conversion' is possible, men will trust to the possibility of a moral cyclone before death, and meanwhile will live an effortless, and therefore an immoral, life. Will the labourers begin their work 'early in the morning,' if the eleventh hour will do as well? Or, to put the case more generally, as it has been put lately, does not 'the doctrine of forgiveness of sins on repentance, even in the last moments of life, favour spirituality and salvation at the expense of morals'?[1]

No doubt it is true that that teaching of forgiveness—the belief that even at the eleventh hour the sinner may be pardoned and enfolded in the grace of God—may be, and has often been, perverted to real moral harm. According to the way in which the doctrine is taught it is the worst corruption or the noblest boast of the Christian religion. Again and again that truth has been made the excuse for sin; it has been made an anæsthetic of the conscience; it has

[1] J. C. Morison, *The Service of Man*, v. vi.

destroyed souls. But over and over again it has been the beginning of a new life, a real message of reconciliation, the reception of the prodigal, of the woman who was a sinner, of the thief upon the cross. It is the central truth that Divine forgiveness is ever at hand as soon as man turns to be forgiven.

As we draw nearer to the season of Lent again, the doctrine of forgiveness will necessarily have a place in our thoughts. How do we put to ourselves the truth that God is merciful? Is our forgiveness a real thing to us now, or is it a hope of a future possibility? You must judge by your lives. Are you struggling for the right? seeking to know the true? conforming yourselves to what is holy, and just, and pure? reaching forward like an athlete to the perfect life? If not, every day and every hour character is forming, the possibility of a change for good or evil is becoming at least less likely. Even God's power is being limited by every rejection of His love and the influences of His Spirit. And the parable of the labourers says nothing of men who *rejected* the Master's call. There may have been such among those who at the eleventh hour went into the vineyard. But, believe me, it is a dangerous thing to trust to such a possibility. I am not thinking of men living in sin, but of those, like so many among ourselves here, who are putting great

questions off, allowing other things to thrust them on one side, as if at any moment they might begin the Christian life. All that we know of the continuity of life and character goes the other way. Habits are forming which you will find it hard to break; the eye which should accustom itself to see the light is turning to the darkness; the will which should be winning its victories for God is being enervated or enslaved.

We cannot then begin too soon the heavenly race; we cannot strive too earnestly. That is the lesson of Septuagesima Sunday. May He Who is the Author and Finisher of our faith help each one of us so to run that he may obtain!

# XII.

## LENTEN RETIREMENT.[1]

*'Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.'*
—S. Mark vi. 31.

The season of Lent, as year by year it comes round to us, draws near fraught with many a rich lesson, many a new thought, to the follower of Jesus Christ. And at different points in our spiritual life different aspects will assume an especial prominence. We are living perhaps in circumstances of prosperity, all things seem to go well with us, and Lent bids us think of that forty days of fasting which the Saviour of the world endured; or we are living not exactly carelessly, but with the light-hearted hopefulness of youth, and Lent comes to bid us remember that the perfect human life is not a life of unclouded sunshine; or we have been living as it seems in God's smile, dwelling with Him in the Mount, and Lent reminds us it cannot always be so There must be seasons when God,

[1] Preached on Quinquagesima Sunday 1889.

to try our love, will seem to withdraw His brightness and leave us fasting in the wilderness, alone as it seems with the wild beasts, the old hated sins, as though once more they would claim us as their prey. But there is one aspect of Lent which can hardly fail to appeal to us in this day. We are most of us living, as many almost necessarily must live, in all the busy, anxious cares of a busy, anxious age, our duties or our business laying claim to every moment of our time, till the throng and crush of earthly things prevent us from coming near to touch the Saviour's robe. Then it is that our solemn Lenten fast bids us come into our chambers and shut our doors, offers to the jaded, wearied soul a little rest, a short breathing-space in which we may gather strength to wrestle on, a moment's retirement from that unceasing 'coming and going' which makes up the greatness and the littleness of our life in the world. 'Come ye yourselves apart,' the Lord Jesus says to our restless souls, 'and rest a while': apart from the world to rest with God, apart from the heaving, surging billows to the summit of the Higher Rock, from which we may look down upon the tumult beneath.

Even if our life is not that hurrying life which so many live now, it is just this view of Lent that I want to put before you to-day—Lent as a time of

retirement, a special opportunity for being alone with God. As a nation we are becoming increasingly alive to the economic dangers, physical and moral, of a life without leisure. The deadening of spiritual energy, the choking of spiritual life and aspirations—these are the parallel dangers to the religious life which knows not the blessing of retirement. You will see, then, that by the rest of religious retirement we mean something different from that rest which belongs at all times to those who are living with God. For that is an abiding thing; this is occasional. And here at the very outset let me guard against a possible misconception of that word 'retirement.' Religious retirement means a withdrawing ourselves for a special purpose and at a special time, just as he whose life is the life of one who is praying always has yet his special time of prayer, or as He Whose Life was lived in the full consciousness of God yet loved to withdraw Himself to the lonely mountain-top and spend whole nights in prayer to God. Of course I do not mean that we are for a time to confine ourselves, even if we could, to a sort of cloister life. Our daily life has its duties, and to neglect these would be to dishonour God. Retirement, then, must not mean isolation. That is often only the false interpretation put upon the word by a Pharisaic self-righteousness,

But I suppose all those among us who try to think about Church seasons at all will seek to win from their daily employments, especially from their daily pleasures, a little time to give up especially to God. Not that the pleasures are themselves wrong—if so, no time throughout the year might we give to them—but because, harmless as they are, we want to offer them up as a special gift to God. Apart from special Lent services which it may be our privilege to attend, we would get more time for prayer, and meditation, and self-examination, and the study of God's Word; and would not give what costs us nothing, as the child will snatch moments for any work of love, not from school-hours, but from the time that is his own. And life's duties are our school tasks, which sometimes we would gladly abandon under the pretext of giving more time to God, while we diminish not by one jot or tittle our amusements or our social pleasures. Such, however, is no true offering to God, nor can we hope that He will draw near when we offer so costless a gift. Even society itself, and the fashions of the world in which we live, allow of, even suggest, some such retrenchment of time. There is an interval, a pause, at least, in some of our social gatherings; we have time thrown on our hands which we may use for God.

Let us clearly understand this, then. The time that is to be dedicated to Lenten retirement must be 'redeemed' time—time won, not from duties, but from pleasures. Just as fasting may not trench on that which is necessary to health, but may simply limit us in what we might do without, so in redeeming some special time for prayer and self-examination we must make up our mind to give up some luxuries. And we none of us live *without* luxuries. Those few minutes we give, perhaps, to our social chat is not a necessity; the comfortable half-hour that we spend over our daily paper is not a necessity; the time we spend in unnecessary letter-writing, or the odd times we pass we hardly know how in mere do-nothingness—all these might be spared, or limited, and dedicated to God. Mind, I am not saying that any of these things are wrong; some of them, if not actually duties, are so closely connected with duties that we cannot omit them. But the proof that they can be limited or curtailed in the interests of Lenten quiet is proved by the fact that we do limit them, criticising even those parts of our day's routine that from their very regularity seem to have become necessary, if we have at heart something for which time must be redeemed. What time each can best give, each must judge for himself; but I believe no man honestly reviewing the way in which

he spends his time can say: 'I cannot, without neglecting my duty, redeem a special time for Lenten retirement. I have no social entertainments which might be given up for a time, no intercourse with my fellow-men that both I and they might not do without, no half-hour when my business will allow that I should go apart and rest awhile.'

But suppose we have secured such a time of rest, what will it do for us? How will it help us in running our daily race?

1. Well, first, it will teach us self-knowledge. Well might the heathen poet say 'the maxim, "Know thyself," came down from heaven.'[1] In the light of Christianity we may say self-knowledge is the whole of religion. To know one's-self is for the Christian to realise the two inseparable truths of human weakness and God's strength. It culminates in the experience of one who has learned to say: 'When I am weak, then am I strong'; 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' And for this self-knowledge seasons of retirement are an indispensable qualification. For in the world we live more or less a life that is not our true life. There is, if I may use the phrase, an element of competition even in spiritual things; men are, as it were, kept up to the mark by their proximity to others, by a desire not

[1] Juvenal, *Sat.* xi. 27.

to be left behind in goodness or morality; and often we do not realise how artificial our standards are, how much our life was resting upon the opinion of others, the love of approbation which, though in itself a good, often becomes a false motive in our lives. We must learn, then, to go back to first principles; to take nothing for granted; to strip off all that is accidental in our lives, and try and see ourselves as we really are. Well has it been said by a holy man: 'That which thou art in the solitude of thy chamber, that thou really art.' Then, as we stand alone in the Presence of God, every act stripped of the colouring which human praise and blame can give, without any of those secondary helps which the love of approbation and the desire to please so often lend us in the world, putting on one side those false standards by which we judge, the waxen wings which have borne us aloft hitherto melted in the rays of the sun—then we begin to know ourselves. And as we review our past spiritual life we see the shadows of selfish and interested motives darkening what once seemed clear and fair; our fancied love of God in that new light was but an æsthetic or poetical devotion to an ideal, our humility a skilfully concealed but now discovered pride; the very bright ones which seemed to guard our way are but as evil spirits in the form of an angel

of light. Such is the first dulling, deadening effect of lying prostrate and alone in the Presence of our God. Everything looks so petty and so poor, there is not room for self-satisfaction or self-complaisance in the Presence of God. But it is but the first effect; and if our retirement leads us not beyond this, it will leave us in despair.

2. But there is another kind of knowledge which retirement can teach, and it is *the knowledge of God.* That is the true and the only real counterpart of the knowledge of self. It is the realising of God's strength made perfect in man's weakness which alone can save us from despair. *Retirement, I say, is the great means of knowing God.* For knowledge is born of intercourse and communion with its objects. He who would know his fellow-men must live among them. He who would draw closer the ties which bind him to his brother man, whether it be for business and commerce or for pleasure and society, loses no opportunity for being near to and mixing with his fellows. He who made man his study sought to learn his subject in the crowded market-place. And if we are to know God it must be by losing no opportunity for being *with* Him: with Him in those places where He has set His Name—in His Church, and His Sacrament, and His Word; above all, in *prayer.*

It is strange how constantly we fail to recognise the close parallel there is between what we call our intellectual and our spiritual faculties. What is a commonplace in the one sphere is an unknown or undeveloped truth in the other. We know that a bodily or intellectual power unexercised becomes useless. The limb unused loses its power to move; the natural faculty for any branch of knowledge, if undeveloped and untrained, becomes worthless, because it never gets beyond its rudimentary state. Is there no atrophy of conscience, of faith, of religion? And, on the other hand, training in any of these faculties seems, while developing what is already there, to give almost new powers. Well, it must be the same with that delicate organ Conscience, by which we know God. At first it is but the germ of a great power; dimly and vaguely it sees that there are two spheres, the evil and the good; but the border-line is hazy and obscure, and the two seem to run into one another. There is a vague consciousness of the reality of a spiritual and invisible world, of the being of an all-loving and all-powerful Governor, who shall right the wrongs of earth and reward every man according to his deeds: but it is communion with that Invisible which alone can make us know it. Then, in ever-increasing clearness, there will come out the eternal

and immutable laws of the moral world; then, in ever-increasing beauty, will there break upon the soul the vision of God, as it draws near that perfect state in which it shall see Him as He is. Then more and more as we rest with our eye fixed on the opening scene shall God's economy of goodness reveal itself—His power triumphing where man's weakness failed, His love victorious in the redemption of the sinner from his sin. Dark and gloomy and dispiriting our retrospect of life may have been, a chronicle of broken vows and frequent falls, of resolutions unfulfilled and strivings after holiness checked and crushed; but the future is bright with a new light, the wilderness made joyful by the ministering angels, the despairing cry of human weakness has given way to the triumphant boast which springs from a deeper, truer knowledge of God: 'I can do all things through Christ Which strengtheneth me.'

But this knowledge of God and of ourselves which comes from retirement with God brings with it a new power for doing our duties in the world. We have learned our own weakness, we have realised God's strength. We know the calm, restful sense of being alone with God; away from the noise and bustle and excitement of the busy world. We seem to have withdrawn for a while into the sanctuary of God, and

perhaps our first thought is, 'Oh that I might never leave it! never go back to that which disquiets and draws me away from God!'

Brethren, there is a higher, a nobler aspiration still. There is a nobler end for the Christian by God's grace to realise: *not* to leave the world for the sanctuary, but to carry the sanctuary of God into the world. That is the great sacramental truth of the Christian life. 'In the repose of a saintly spirit there is latent power.'[1] The presence by which you seemed in your retirement to be flooded, is the presence which shall go with you into the world. It is the ark of God which shall carry victory over the enemies, the real presence which transforms your very bodies into the temples of the Living God, the light which will brighten and make clear your earthly path, the continual source of strength and nourishment, preparing you a table in the very midst of your enemies, a fountain of living water springing up within you to quench the battle thirst. In retirement and private prayer you learned what it is to be alone with God, and now in the roar and din of conflict you realise what it is to have God with you. In the fiercest fight you may retire for rest into that inner sanctuary where the Eternal Presence dwells, and then though the outer

[1] John Caird, *Spiritual Rest*, p. 202.

courts be besieged and battered by ten thousand foes, the voice comes forth from the uncreated glory, the Holy of Holies, into which the High Priest alone has entered, the voice which in moments of rest you have learned to love, which gives strength, and confidence, and hope: 'Greater is He that is for you than they that are against you;' 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'

## XIII.

## THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION.[1]

'*That I may know Him, and the Power of His Resurrection.*'—PHIL. iii. 10.

WE are still within the octave of Easter, and our thoughts still hover round the open grave where the Risen Saviour lay, as though we would read deeper and more clearly its many-sided teaching. And if we leave it for a moment during the forty days which intervene between Easter and Ascensiontide, it is that our eyes may rest upon the Risen Lord, and, listening to His words, may grasp more fully the meaning of those Easter blessings which, even in her time of waiting, are the Church's heritage.

We follow step by step the earthly Life of Jesus Christ, with a view to *realising* it—that is, bringing it home to ourselves in such a way that it shall no longer seem to us a history only which began and ended in the past, but something present to us now, as present

[1] Preached on Low Sunday.

as the ever-present living Lord, and having its counterpart, however imperfect it may be, in the lives of those who, by union in Christ's Death and Burial, share with Him His Risen Life. That is what makes the Life of Jesus Christ so different from all other lives, and the Bible so different from all other books. Other lives, however beautiful and lovely and noble they may be, however vividly they may set before us some history in the past, often in the end serve only to discourage and dishearten us. We are so little and so weak when measured even by the highest human standards, so frail in our purposes, so easily deterred from the end we set before us, so powerless to carry out even that which we persistently desire, so selfish even when we fancy we are playing the philanthropist, so vexed and disappointed if others pass us by in the race. To read, then, of those who have triumphed where we fail, is enough almost to paralyse effort instead of rousing it to higher exertion. It is only one here and there who, after many a failure, will still take encouragement from the success of others. Most men begin to draw distinctions, and grant themselves unlawful dispensations from their tasks. They say those men were made of other metal, or their circumstances were different from mine, their difficulties less insuperable, their resources less limited than mine;

and so, with perhaps a stinted and half-grudging approbation of their lives as the lives of men who moved in another sphere, we content ourselves with admiration, and cease to strive to imitate. And it is not the inert, half-hearted amongst men who feel this despair; it is oftener, I think, the more earnest, and those who have honestly set before themselves the highest patterns, who are most cast down at failure.

The Life of Jesus Christ, however, raises in us no such thoughts as these, and that not because we draw a distinction, and say—Yes, He was God and we are men, for that would be to deny that He was *man* as well, and tempted in all points like as we are; but because we feel that that perfect Life of the Perfect Man is no mere distant model set before us to mock us by its unrealisable loveliness, but the living picture of a living Lord Who, in every one who would be perfect, is ready to show forth His own perfection, not merely raising human nature by example, as an earthly model may sometimes do, but transforming it by the Indwelling of that Higher Presence which is Christ in us.

And as the Life of Jesus Christ is thus marked off from all other lives in this, that it not only elevates as a model, but transforms as a power in us, it is natural that the knowledge of that Divine Life should

be different from the knowledge of any other life. If it is not merely an example but a living power, it partakes of that double—I may say that sacramental character which is traceable in every revelation of God to man. We have noticed this again and again, how the inward and the spiritual is presented to us under the veil of the outward and the visible. It is so in the most general of all God's revelations to man, the revelation of His eternal power and Godhead in nature. One of our modern poets beautifully expresses this in the words—

> 'God is so good He wears a fold
> Of heaven and earth about His face,
> Like secrets kept for love untold.'

We could not bear the open sight of God, could not see Him and live, and, therefore, He reveals Himself to us sacramentally, under some outward and visible sign, which we may see and touch, while He, the Unseen Present One, is speaking in power to our hearts. It was so in the great revelation on which we Christians rest our religion, the Incarnation of the Son of God in human form. There, too, was the double character, the real man, Whom disciples loved and the traitor kissed, and cruel persecutors put to a shameful death. But hidden there, save to the eye of loving faith, was God, the mighty Lord, the Real

Presence of the Eternal Son, under the veil of a real humanity. It is so once more in that Holy Mystery which, at Eastertide especially, we love to think upon, the Sacrament which Christ Himself ordained as the means whereby, under the outward and visible signs of Bread and Wine, that Easter promise should be fulfilled to His disciples, 'Lo, I am with you always.'

It is this which I have called the sacramental character of God's revelations to man which makes the revelation in the Person of Jesus Christ to have the double character which we always attach to it. For we all who believe the Divinity of Christ, however little we know of Theology, however ready we may be to fling the term 'mysticism' at anything which we cannot understand or reduce at once to the language of everyday life, yet feel that somehow His Life and ours are *one*, in a way in which they could not be one if He had not been God. No one can read S. Paul's Epistles thoughtfully without seeing what a prominent thought was this one of union with Christ in His Life and Death and Resurrection; cannot but be struck with the way in which he takes it for granted, writing to the Colossians, that Christ's Resurrection was their resurrection, and that henceforward their life is changed; cannot fail to see how all his perils and sufferings and persecutions he accepted as a necessary

corollary from the fact that he shared that Christ-like life which could not be perfect without fellowship in Christ's Sufferings and Death. Our own Prayer Book has done much to keep this truth before men's eyes. Turn to our Baptismal Service, or to the Collects we have been reading lately, and you will see this fellowship, or communion, or oneness with Christ's Life is taken for granted. Many of us, I know, do not attach much meaning to such words as 'buried with Christ in baptism,' 'crucified with Christ,' 'risen with Christ,' and if we were called upon to say what they meant, we should probably take refuge in some rough-and-ready explanation which would touch but the outside of a great truth.

S. Paul had a far deeper meaning in those words, 'That I may know Him, and the power of His Resurrection, and the fellowship of His Sufferings, being made conformable unto His Death,' 'if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.' You see there is a distinction implied between knowing that Jesus is risen and knowing *the Power of His Resurrection.* It is the old distinction between knowing a truth and realising a truth, receiving it as a barren fact, and feeling it present as a living reality. To know that Jesus Christ lived and died and rose from the grave is not Christianity, any more

than reading the Bible and going to church is religion. To know that in that wondrous Life we each had a part, that in the Incarnation our fallen nature was taken into God, that with Christ we were crucified, with Him were buried, with Him rose on Easter morning, is to know the power of Christ's Life. As Good Friday comes round year after year, we are reminded that at the Cross of Jesus Christ Christians fall into two classes —those who are crucified with Christ, and those who by their sins are joining with the crucifiers. And on Easter morning the distinction is no less clear between those who are dead in trespasses and sins, and those who know the risen life in union with the Risen Lord. All alike have known the truth, have heard the story of Christ's Life and Death and glorious Resurrection from the dead: to some the knowledge of it is a mighty power transforming them daily into likeness with the Lord; to others it is nothing but a wonderful life, with much of beauty and poetry about it, and much which they would imitate if they could, and that is all. They know that Christ Who died is risen. They know not the 'power of the Resurrection.' And so their religion becomes an unreal thing, and their profession almost a sham, and a very glaring discrepancy appears between the Christian truth which they profess, and the lives which, in spite of it, they

lead. And then they begin to ask—Is it even a fact? Can we prove it? What producible evidence is there?

'The power of His Resurrection.' What could S. Paul have meant by such a phrase? Look at his life and you will see; read his letters and you will know. It meant that, in that rising from the dead, a mighty force was set in motion which ceased not on the Resurrection morn, but went on conquering and to conquer, triumphing over death in us as then it triumphed over death in its short-lived dominion over Christ, robbing the grave of every remnant of victory from the time when the stone was rolled away from Joseph's sepulchre.

For S. Paul, the Resurrection was not only the defeat and overthrow, at a given moment, of death and the grave, which entailed results when the power was no longer present. In Christ's Resurrection he saw and recognised a new cause still operating, a force which was ever gaining strength as it worked. The Divine power which, on Easter morning, had justified its claim to lay down life and take it again is present in every member of Christ's Body, conquering death in them as it did in Him—not the death of the body, but that more final death of the soul, the death of separation from God, the death of sin. The resurrection of the body was a distant thing, the

resurrection of the soul was a present effect of the present power of Christ's Resurrection. At the great day all men should rise again with their bodies, but a brighter, more glorious, because more present truth shone out in the conviction that even now they were risen with Christ.

How many Christians now seize but the one side of that great truth which springs from Easter thoughts. They see not the inner spiritual meaning. They cannot pass through the dark veil of Sacraments and see the present Lord, present in the power of His Resurrection triumph. Men know that Christ died and rose again, and that they are struggling helplessly with the dead mass of sin around and within, and they keep separate the two, knowing not that the only power which can raise them from the death in which they are, and give them life, is the power, the present inworking, of the Resurrection of the Lord.

Some go further than this in their perception of the meaning of Christ's Resurrection. They know that their life is somehow influenced by Christ's, that death is not the same thing since the Saviour rose. And they strew the graves of their dear ones with Easter flowers, in beautiful and natural symbolism, expressing their sure hope that those they love will rise again because Christ has risen. And yet they

have gone but a little way in the knowledge of what S. Paul calls the power of the Resurrection. There is a tinge of sadness, coupled with the thought of separation, which robs them of half their Easter joy. They say, as Mary said with more of grief than of gladness, 'I know that they will rise again at the Last Day,' but till then there is a dreary waiting-time of separation which even the knowledge that Christ is risen cannot wholly banish from their thoughts. Ah! they know not the Presence in which they stand. They forget that He Who is ever in their midst declares, not 'I will be,' but 'I *am* the Resurrection and the Life,' the resurrection of both quick and dead; of those who live,—for in union with Me they are already alive from the dead, theirs already is a risen life; of those who sleep,—because the risen life knows never more the stroke of death, though its organism must decay till once more it is quickened by the risen soul.

The real evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ for our day is its present power. Only the gospel of the Resurrection has succeeded in grappling with the fact of sin, that stupendous and mysterious fact which none can explain and many would gladly explain away. The thought of Greece never realised its greatness, never knew the depth and misery of sin.

Oriental religions have sometimes felt it, and their answer is a gospel of despair. Judaism knew it, and in increasing clearness proclaimed a gospel of *hope*. But Christianity triumphed over it by its teaching of forgiveness. In the new power of forgiveness won by Christ's Death, the new power of regeneration secured by His Resurrection, men, and the noblest men in every age since Christ, have risen above the death of sin. We can trace back their lineage from our own time, back to the time of the Resurrection of Him Whom men knew as Jesus of Nazareth. But there we come to a stop. Before Christ there is no forgiveness, save amongst the Jews, in the forward-reaching Messianic hope. Everything tends to concentrate our thoughts on Christ as being the source from Whom the new life, the new power, entered into the world. And with one voice, those who have felt the forgiveness of sin and the rebound of the refranchised soul, trace it back to that first Easter morning and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is vain for those who have never known the burden of sin and the new life of the pardoned soul to challenge us to produce evidence which would satisfy a jury that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. If by such evidence it could be proved, it would still be a dead fact in history, not a source of strength in the moral life. One element of

experience would still be wanting. It is as though men sought to prove a scientific truth by putting deliberately aside the most important of the facts to be explained. It is as when the Pharisees would have drawn away the poor man whose eyes had been opened from the fact that he knew to theories of which he could not judge. 'Whether He be a sinner or not, I know not. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.'[1] So is it with those who are living the new life of the pardoned soul. They are not careful about the cross-questioning of the witnesses, the criticism of the Gospel narrative. Their quarrel with those who find that the Resurrection of Christ is not proved is not that they question too carefully and examine too strictly, but that they are shutting their eyes to a part of the facts. They are not surprised that those who are strangers to the struggles of the moral life, and put on one side as irrelevant the moral history of the world, should find the evidence defective. But those who in their one experience know that Christ can save a soul are not staggered at the thought that He should rise from the dead. It is not to them 'a thing incredible,' for they, like the Evangelists and S. Paul, have known Christ, and the power of His Resurrection.

[1] S. John ix. 25.

# XIV.

## THE RISEN LIFE THE NATURAL LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN.[1]

'*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*'—Col. iii. 1.

It often, perhaps generally, happens that when a great sorrow or a great joy comes to us, the first thing we are inclined to say to those who would sympathise with us is, 'I don't seem to realise it yet. It is all so new and strange. I know it is true. I have no doubt about the fact, and yet I constantly catch myself allowing my thoughts and my actions to run on in their accustomed groove till something comes and reminds me of what has happened, and I am vexed and annoyed with myself for having forgotten.' All of us who have ever experienced a great sorrow will know exactly what I mean. When some life infinitely closely blended with our life is cut short

[1] Preached at Whitehall, Third Sunday after Easter 1888.

suddenly, we are stunned for the time, we repeat the words 'death' and 'sorrow,' but while they are on our lips our thoughts wander back; we are in the old familiar scenes, listening to the well-known voice, forgetting our sorrow because we have not *realised* it. And, though the experience is perhaps not so common, the difficulty is the same in realising a great joy, especially if it has come suddenly upon us. When the effort of months or perhaps years of patient striving is crowned with success, it seems 'too good to be true.' We cannot believe that the prize we have wished for so long is really ours. It is not that we doubt the fact, but we don't *realise* it. It has to become part of our ordinary life, giving its colour and its brightness to everything before we can be said to *realise* it.

So it is with the great truths of the Christian Faith. It is not so much that we doubt them, that we do not believe them to be true; it is that we do not *realise* them. A great dogma like that of the Resurrection of our Lord,—that central truth which dominates our services, our hymns, and our Bible-reading during the forty days which intervene between Easter and Ascensiontide,—that great fact seems so far away from us, so much outside our everyday life. It is true, no doubt, but so long as it is not realised, it is an external

truth,—that is to say, a dead fact, and not a living reality. And if, while it is merely something external to us, we begin to speculate about it, it is quite easy to think of it as a matter which we may calmly discuss, or perhaps put on one side without discussion, as a mere 'dogma'; and a dogmatic truth seems so unlovely, and then, besides, it is a 'dogma,' and that is quite enough to condemn it in the eyes of those who have never cared to ask what a 'dogma' is, or what it means.

Now, I am not to-day going to attempt to explain what a 'dogma' is, but I will venture to say this: There is no dogma of the Catholic Church which, if realised, does not affect character; no dogma, therefore, which can be rejected or left unrealised without the moral character being so far marred and made less perfect.

But our thoughts at this season turn to one great truth especially,—the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ,—and my wish is to lead you to think of it neither as an *historical fact*, though it *is* an historical fact, nor as a *dogma*, though it *is* a dogma, but as a truth to be realised in the life of each one of us. And in order to do this we must go, not to the Gospels where the fact is recorded, nor to Church History where the dogma is formulated, and guarded and

defended, but to the Epistles and the Acts where we see it the moving principle of the great Apostolic lives.

No doubt men have come to think of doctrines as having but little to do with life, even as some speak of theory as the antithesis of fact. But neither antithesis was known or could have been accepted in the age of the Apostles. The great doctrines of the faith were the *theories* on which their life was built, without which their lives would not have been what we know they were.

Is that still possible? Or rather, is it not still true that the highest life—I mean the highest judged even by human standards—is the life that draws its power from faith in a supernatural fact?

'If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above.' When S. Paul wrote this to the Colossian Christians, he had in his mind a special danger, a danger which, coming from that impulse which afterwards developed into Gnosticism, threatened to make the work of Christ unmeaning and unnecessary, and therefore he reminds the Christians what was 'the Faith' into which they had been baptized. The Resurrection of Christ is the resurrection of the Christian; to seek those things which are above is both the *consequence* and the *proof* of the fact that Christ is risen.

Let us put it in the language of our own day. When we are called upon to make a choice in life, and feel ourselves in doubt, it is not generally a choice between good and evil, or even between the 'right' and the 'pleasant.' For a man will hardly hesitate when the antithesis presents itself thus. That is why the celebrated story of Prodicus, 'The Choice of Hercules' seems to us so commonplace. Every one would choose as he did. For no one chooses evil for evil's sake; but we are constantly called upon to choose between lines of conduct of which, though neither may be exactly *wrong*, the one is higher than the other, and demands more unselfishness, more sacrifice of one's own individual good for the good of others. Why should we take the higher line? It is the decision in matters like this that raises or lowers the general character of life. To be content with a low level, to be satisfied with a little, either in intellectual, or moral, or spiritual matters, is the first condition of deterioration. And there has always been that broad distinction between the nobler and the inferior natures. The great men among the men of pre-Christian days were those who made the nobler choice. And there are those who, though standing outside the Christian Church, yet in our day do the same. We should be as false to facts as we should be narrow and

unchristian in spirit if we attempted to claim high, pure, unselfish, forward-reaching lives as a monopoly for the Church of Christ.

And yet, if S. Paul is right, one of the great dogmatic truths of the Christian Faith has a very close and intimate relation with this choice of the higher life. What is that relation? Surely it is the same relation as that in which a supernatural revelation always stands to the natural life. A revelation from God does not reverse the natural processes, but it lifts them into a higher region, it transforms and transfigures them. And the revelation of Christianity does this mainly by giving a new motive power, a new force in the moral world, to accomplish that towards which the highest natural efforts tend.

When we talk about the contrast between ancient and Christian ethics, it is quite easy to miss that which is the real and essential character of Christianity, and see in it only a lengthening out of the moral horizon, or a widening of the area of charity or love. It is true that this is how the new force manifested itself; but the new force, whatever it was, came direct from a supernatural belief. And from first to last it *appealed* to the supernatural as not only real, but as *the most real fact* in human life. Thus, in nothing did the ancient world fail, when judged by modern, which,

remember, are Christian standards, as in the virtue of Purity. How did the great Christian teachers transform σωφροσύνη into Chastity? Not by any appeal to social duty, but by an appeal to a great supernatural reality. 'What! know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?'[1] 'Shall I take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot?'[2]

So with that which we may call the summing up of all the virtues, *unselfishness*. There were unselfish lives before Christianity came, there are unselfish lives outside Christianity now, but it was with Christianity that there came a new *appeal*. 'Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price.' 'If Christ so loved us, we ought also to love one another.'

And so, generally, in that seeking after those things which are above, in living the higher life, the appeal is once more, not to the nobility and greatness of that life, as something which we may aspire to, an ἰδέα τἀγαθοῦ which by its moral beauty may attract us and lift us out of ourselves. The appeal is to the new nature which is ours in virtue of our resurrection with Christ. The highest life is *our own proper life*, because we are risen with Christ. To live the lower life now is not simply to fail to raise ourselves; it is to

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 19. [2] 1 Cor. vi. 15

degrade our nature below that which God has made it.

And this implies a fact which, however hard it may seem to us, with our notions of continuity, was certainly a commonplace to the Apostles, viz. the belief that human nature since the Resurrection of Christ is changed, and that with Him a new power has entered into it. Christianity meant for them not a mere modification, not a mere development, still less a mere revelation of the fact that human nature is a nobler thing than we thought it; it meant a change. 'If any man be in Christ, he is *a new creature*.' 'Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.' And everything in the supernatural order, from Baptism to the last Sacrament we receive, is designed to keep us in full union with that new power, 'the power of the Resurrection' which has changed human life.

But this change, though it is often spoken of in the Epistles as a passing from death unto life, is no magical thing, no sudden transformation, by which the sinful nature is exchanged for a holy nature. The baptized infant is promised no immunity from temptation, no absolute protection from sin, when he receives 'that thing which by nature he cannot have.' The fact that he is made 'a member of Christ, the child of

God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven,' does not turn him into a 'saint' in the popular, which, of course, is not the Bible, sense of that word. But it draws him within the circle of that Divine power, the power of the Resurrection,—puts him, if we may so say, in relation with, and, so soon as may be, conscious relation with, that Divine Power which with Christ entered into man, and in Christ conquered sin. But he has got to realise his greatness, not to make himself great. And it is the mission of the Church of Christ to help every one of her members to *realise* their greatness; only she does not draw the line between the baptized and the unbaptized in such a way as to imply that the work of Christ extends only to the members of the Divine Society. It is they only who know the fulness of the privilege of the sons of God, but it was the whole of human nature that the Eternal Son lifted into God.

I think that is why Christianity begins so differently from all those systems, philosophical or religious, which have helped to raise man. It does not promise something as conditional on man's effort, but it calls out the highest effort by reminding him what the love of God has made him. It is not said, 'If ye seek those things which are above, ye too shall rise as Christ rose.' The appeal is this—'Ye are risen with

Christ, therefore seek those things which are above. It is not said, 'Strive against sin, and at last you shall be dead to sin,' but, 'Ye died to sin when human nature in Christ suffered on the Cross. If you are servants to sin now, it is a new slavery that you have taken on yourselves. *Now* are ye the sons of God'—'Ye were the servants of sin once.' The note of triumph which runs through our Easter hymns means nothing if it does not mean that Christ's Resurrection is a fact in our own moral life. To know that it is this is to realise the Resurrection.

When we read the old story of the Babel builders it all seems so childish to us. How could man ever raise himself up to heaven? What need to confound the tongues? They who find their own way to heaven never speak the same language. Is it more rational, when the greatest of heathen writers tells us that while a life of moderation and moral self-restraint is man's own life, there is a life beyond, a divine or superhuman life, which the philosophic few may look forward to.[1] It all sounds very beautiful, very elevating, to say, Man is mortal, but he must try and make himself immortal. Man is man, but he must aspire to live the life of the gods, and most likely the gods will commend his efforts.[2] It is an

[1] κρείττων ἢ κατ' ἄνθρωπον.—Ar. *Eth.* x. c. 7. [2] *Ibid.*

appeal which can only be to the few, because it is the few only who can hope to rise above the level. How does Christ appeal to us by the power of the Resurrection? 'Ye are risen with Christ.' Your nature is not merely human; it is taken into God. 'Seek those things which are above.' They are your own. To live amongst them, and to live for them, is your true life. If you have realised the Resurrection, the supernatural life which the ancients vaguely longed for is your natural life. It was *natural* for the Christ to rise; it was *natural* for Him to ascend up where He was before. It is no mere ideal which we set before you when you are told to 'seek those things which are above.'

Do not take the meaning out of the Ascension Day Collect. Do not think the risen life is the life of heaven only. It is the *natural,* though hidden, life of those who know the power of the Resurrection, who by the very law of that new nature which is theirs, because it is Christ's, Who has passed into the heavens, are able in heart and mind thither to ascend, and even while they walk on earth to dwell continually with Him.

# XV.

## THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST AND OF THE CHRISTIAN.[1]

*'Wherefore, He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.'*—EPH. iv. 8.

OF all the great events in the Life of our Lord, that which we are called upon to celebrate next Thursday is the one which intelligent people understand least, and good people think of least. And yet it must have been the event to which the disciples' thoughts would go back most often. It was the last occasion on which they saw their Master with their bodily eyes. We speak of the last words of the Saviour on the Cross; but after all, they were but the last words which He spoke before His Death. His last words really were a great command and a great promise: 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.' That was the command; and the promise in the strength of which Christians have in

[1] Preached on Rogation Sunday.

every age set about to obey the command was the promise, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'

Now, it seems to me that the reasons why Ascension Day is not understood or appreciated as it ought to be, are mainly two:—

1. It comes on a week-day, which is not in the business world observed by a cessation of work, as Good Friday is, and therefore some cannot, and the large mass of people will not, come and worship in God's house on Ascension Day, and so they learn little about its meaning. When a nation is getting careless about religion, the week-day services are the first to show it, just as when times are bad it is always the charities which suffer first; or, as in our own lives, when we do not feel quite well, it is always our private prayers which are the first to feel the effects. And, on the other hand, when a nation is arousing from religious torpor, which is the case, I believe, with England now, an interest in and a desire for week-day services is an unvarying proof of it. And so I think I may take it for granted that there are a great many here who really want to keep Ascension Day properly, if they can only understand what it ought to mean.

2. And the other reason why Ascension Day is so

ill observed lies deeper, is more dependent on our nature. It is that for most of us it is so much harder to sympathise in a great triumph than in a great sorrow. Few, if any, could kneel through a Good Friday service, and not feel at least something of sympathy with Him Who, 'for us men, and for our salvation,' died upon the Cross. But when we hear of His great triumph, when we are told of His going up as a Conqueror to sit at the right hand of God, it all seems so far away from ourselves that it is not real.

And so I want to try, in preparation for next Thursday, to bring home this great fact, and to show that it is a great fact in our own lives, and that there is a very real sense in which ~~toiling sinful~~ Christians may be not only buried with Christ in Baptism and risen with Him, but may even in this life in heart and mind ascend to Him, and with Him continually dwell.

First, then, let us try and realise the imagery suggested by S. Paul's words. The Ascension meant to him *a great triumph* and the occasion of *a great blessing.*

Why do we go to S. Paul rather than to an Evangelist? Because it is in the Epistles that we learn to realise the meaning of the great facts of Christ's earthly Life. In the Gospels those facts are very real

but not yet realised. It required time for the Church to understand, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, what these things meant. If you want to know about the fact of the Resurrection, go to the Gospels. If you want to know the power of the Resurrection, turn to the Epistles. So it is with the Ascension. The Gospel account is a simple narrative of the fact: 'He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven.'[1] But directly we turn to S. Paul we are struck by this: that he makes so much more of the Ascension than the Evangelists do, speaks of it as a fact, not in our Lord's Life, but in the world's history. The Evangelists speak of the parting; S. Paul has learned to realise the triumph. They saw the hands raised in blessing; S. Paul has learned what the blessings were.

Look for a moment at the two aspects of the Ascension which are present to S. Paul.

1. It was a great triumph. David, in the 68th Psalm, is describing the triumph of God over His enemies, when the Almighty scattered kings before Israel, the type of His Church. In graphic imagery we are told that the chariots of God are twenty

[1] S. Luke xxiv. 50.

thousand, even thousands of angels. He ascended on high, and led His captivity captive. That is to say, like a great earthly conqueror, He was followed by His trains of captives. You remember in Deborah's song the same expression is used: 'Awake, awake, Deborah! awake, utter a song. Arise, Barak! and lead thy captivity captive'; lead the conquered hosts to grace thy triumph. In S. Paul's day such imagery would be very real. He was writing his Epistle during his two years of imprisonment at Rome. A triumph there had a very definite meaning. Rare as such things became in the days of the Empire, the recollection of them would be still fresh in the minds of men, and the thoughts of the imprisoned Apostle would naturally turn from that which was still the goal of every Roman general's ambition, to one a conqueror too, who had won a victory which no Cæsar ever could contemplate, and led in captivity hosts to whom the subject princes of the world-empire were as nothing. S. Paul, in the capital of that great empire, could not but look forward and backward; backward to the first founding of a little company of twelve; forward to the day when the Roman Empire should be no more, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ was Lord to the glory of God the

[1] Judges v. 12.

Father. Already the triumph procession had begun, and the Conqueror had gone up on high to that place from which He had gone to victory. There were many things which would give a special appropriateness to the comparison between Christ's triumph and that of a Roman general. First of all, it was decreed by Roman law that no general should receive a triumph—that is, should be allowed to enter the capital preceded by his conquered enemies, and followed by his victorious legions—unless he had personally taken part in the campaign. There was no such thing then as winning a victory in the seclusion of the general's tent. The general fought in the forepart of his legions, and led them to victory. And had not that great Conqueror to Whom the Apostle's thoughts turned fought in the forefront of the battle —nay, fought and won alone? Had He not been the first to burst the gates of death, to die and rise again that He might destroy him who had the power of death? Then, again, no Roman general might triumph unless his victory was final and brought with it peace. Here, again, the thought of Him Whom prophecy had foreshadowed as the Prince of Peace would rise up in the Apostle's mind. He would think in the midst of trial and suffering of the inalienable gift which Christ had given: 'In Me ye

shall have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' Lastly, the Roman general might have no triumph unless at least five thousand of the enemy had been slain in a single engagement. Would not the Apostle think in a moment of that last fight on Calvary, when the hosts of darkness gathered round the Lord, and the sun seemed to have given up the world to them; and yet they gathered together all their forces, only that the Victor's triumph might be more complete. Never shall the vanquished recover from that deathblow; never shall his legions triumph over them over whose heads floats the banner of the Cross, whose brows are marked with the Victor's sign. If the rejoicing people in their gladness at Goliath's death might shout, 'Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands'; what shall we, the redeemed of the Lord Jesus, say as we remember death robbed of its sting, the grave stripped of its victory, the Prince of the Power of the air driven from his kingdom, and his legions lying dead upon the battle-field of Calvary? Surely the Apostle's parallel was just. None ever gained a victory more final and complete than that which Christ had won. His Resurrection was the acknowledgment of His victory. His Ascension was the triumph of the Victor.

See how, in imagination, we might fill in the picture with the victorious legions of the General following in His train: every Christian in every age who conquered in the Saviour's victory by treading in the Saviour's steps, the disciples who had first proclaimed His triumph, the martyrs who died with a smile of victory upon their face, the Fathers and Apologists who by the same victory vanquished the anti-Christian wisdom of the world, the missionaries who published the good news to all lands—ay, the Christians of ~~to-day~~, whose ~~quiet unhistoric~~ lives are radiant with the same victory over the same enemy through Him that loved them. All these to the eye of faith were present in that grand procession, the triumph of the ascending Lord; and what spectators, think you, were there to proclaim the glories of the Victor? Not the degenerate rabble of degenerate Rome, but a multitude which no man could number, of angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, raising their threefold Holy, Holy, Holy to the Lord of Hosts, crying with a loud voice, 'Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto Him for ever and ever.'

But we must not forget the other aspect of the Lord's Ascension which S. Paul speaks of. When He ascended up on high 'He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.' It was not only a day of

triumph in which every Christian soldier had a part, and shone with the reflected glory of his General,—it was a day of blessing. Here, again, we notice the development of the truth recorded in the Evangelists. They simply tell us that the Lord 'lifted up His hands and blessed them'; but S. Paul sees what that blessing meant. Not for those disciples only was that blessing meant, but for *men*, for the human nature which He had redeemed and glorified. 'He gave gifts unto men.' The literal allusion, doubtless, is to the practice of scattering money among the people, ~~in largess, as it used to be called~~, and distributing sums of money from the spoils to the most prominent among the victorious legions. But the gifts which the Lord Jesus secured for man by His Ascension were the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit, which He had promised to send. 'If I depart, I will send Him unto you.' The disciples who beheld the Lord's departure from earth could see at first only one of the many gifts which that promise contained. The Spirit, who was to come to them on Whitsunday, was to be 'the Comforter.' They could understand that, because it was that of which they now felt most in need; but when S. Paul was writing, the manifold gifts of Christ by the Holy Spirit had begun to show themselves. He was the Comforter; but that was

not all. He was a *Guide* in time of doubt leading them as Christ had promised. He was the *Enlightener*, unfolding to them the deep things of God, the glorious future which was their right by partnership in Christ's victory. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him; but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit. He was their Advocate with God, pleading for them with groanings which cannot be uttered. He was God's messenger to them, arousing, leading, drawing them with cords of love into union with God in Christ. He was the beginning and ending of their spiritual life, transmitting to them the life of Christ in Holy Baptism, strengthening that life by giving more grace in Confirmation, kindling that life of Christ into active operation by realising to them the Presence of Christ in Holy Communion. He was the great *Absolver*, applying to individual souls the pardon won by Christ. He was the great *Strengthener*, giving to them more and more of ~~Christ~~ Himself as they were able to bear it, till the sin-stained soul should be purified and builded into a temple of God through the Holy Spirit.

Such were the blessings which Christ gave unto men by His Ascension; or rather, such was seen to be

the gift He gave when they were able to understand its meaning. That is it which marks off the old-world saints from the Christian—nay, which marks off the Christian of to-day from the great preacher of Christ, John the Baptist. The Spirit of God has been poured out, sent into the world with the definite mission to make men one with Christ. Before the first Whitsunday the Lord was *with* men, now He condescends to dwell *in* them, to be, not at their side, but within them, 'closer' is He 'than breathing, nearer than hands and feet.' 'Know ye not,' says S. Paul to the Corinthians,—'Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.'[1] Christ ascended into heaven for you. His triumph He bids you share; His gifts He has given to you; will you not in heart and mind ascend with Him, and with Him continually dwell?

[1] 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

# XVI.

## THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT TO CONVINCE OF SIN.[1]

'*And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin.*'
—S. John xvi. 8.

We most of us think of Whitsuntide under one of its many bright and happy aspects. It is a season which common usage has made a holiday, and which the Church has ever treated as a time of gladness and rejoicing. And the reason of this is not difficult to discover. For we commonly think of the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, as no doubt the first Christians thought of it, that is, as a time when a great gift was given to the Church for all time. We think of God the Holy Spirit as the Comforter and Strengthener, as a Guide to lead, as the Spirit of Truth to teach, as the Spirit of Love to inspire, as the Source of Life to quicken, as the Holy One to sanctify and transform even our mortal bodies, and

[1] Preached at Whitehall on Whitsunday 1888.

so on. And if we remember at all what that same Gift to the Church meant to the world at large, we put it on one side, because we are members of the Church, not of the 'world,' in the sense in which S. John uses that word, and we can think of the Holy Spirit as *for* us, not *against* us, as fighting on our side against all those forces which in every age are opposed to the truth of God.

But the powers which are opposed to the truth of God are not always, as we are so ready to assume, outside the Church. The κόσμος of evil forces which S. John speaks of as the 'world,' and the κόσμος of Divine power and truth and light which, in the innermost meaning of the term, is the Church, are two worlds, not 'sundered as with an axe.' They interpenetrate one another, they struggle with one another, and, as it seems, with doubtful result. And though we believe that the victory must ultimately be with the truth, 'the end is not yet.' And meanwhile, within us and around us, we see evil triumphant and love refused, and the light lost in the darkness which comprehends it not.

And when we come to think of it, that *couleur-de-rose* view of Christianity which some men take is as untrue to what was revealed as it is difficult to defend in fact. Our Lord never promised a rapid triumph.

What He wrought for man was 'regeneration,' not 'instantaneous conversion.' That is only man's imperfect reading of His purpose. In the individual and in mankind we think a supernatural revelation must mean a kind of magical change, instead of a progressive transformation. If in ourselves the transformation is so slow, how can we wonder that Christianity in the world outside makes so little head against the organised forces of selfishness and pride and lust?

'When He is come He will convince the world of sin:' 'of sin because they believe not on Me.' In the forefront of Christ's account of the Holy Spirit's work stands the fact that the world, which strives against the truth, is convinced of sin. And in the individual man the same is true. 'I was alive without the law once,' says S. Paul, 'but when the commandment came sin revived, and I died.'[1] In a still higher sense is it true of the advent to the soul of the Spirit of God. The struggle, which in Bible language is called the lusting of the flesh against the spirit, is the counterpart of that wider conflict between the world and Christ. We see it going on outside us; we feel it within ourselves.

When, then, it is said that Whitsuntide is the Christian Festival which appeals most naturally to

[1] Rom. vii. 9.

this age, it is only partly true. It comes, as it were, natural to us to look at all that is good and true in the past history of man, in the growth of the State and of morals, of art and science, of philosophy and culture, as the education of the world by the action of the immanent Spirit of God; that very same Spirit Who, in the fulness of His personal working, was revealed on Whitsunday. But that part of His work which Christ put in the foreground does not appeal to us in the same way. We do not like to think of sin; we hate to be convinced or convicted of sin. It is all very well to look on the bright side of the Holy Spirit's working, the promise of peace, of truth, of victory; but the obverse of that picture, the struggle, the rejection of light, the failure, these things we like to hide away. We do not mind calling ourselves 'miserable sinners' if we may think so little of sin as not to be made even uncomfortable by it.

It was because I felt this that I venture to-day to bring forward one side of the truth of Whitsunday which is often left out of sight, and which to some will seem to be out of keeping with the brightness of Whitsunday celebrations.

'He will convict the world of sin.' Certainly, that meant somehow that from the time when the promised Comforter came sin would be known and

recognised as something deeper, darker, more hateful than the world had known it to be before. Of course, when we talk of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we do not mean that He was not present in the world before, speaking to the fathers by the prophets, leading on the heathen by the progressive unfolding of the moral law—teaching in every high and noble life, which set before men a nobler ideal, opening up to them far-reaching possibilities for man as man. All that a Christian philosopher loves to trace as a *præparatio evangelica*, back, right back, to the first crude efforts of savage races after a common good, a true and right to which the individual must conform his actions and his thinking, all this Christianity attributes to the Spirit of God. But we do mean that in the revelation of Whitsunday the world entered on a new era, and that those disciples who were waiting for the promise recognised its advent. And more than that, we are able to say something as to the *character* of that new era in the world's history. The world now began to be convicted of sin as it had never been before, to see it in a new light as the *rejection of love*.

This convincing of sin, then, as ascribed to the Holy Spirit, is but the last term of His working throughout all history. We can see man's consciousness of

sin, his conviction that he is a sinner, his knowledge of what sin is, becoming clearer and clearer with the progressive unfolding of the nature of God. When a cynical novelist tells us that sin is 'a purely Semitic conception,' he touches a truth the full meaning of which he does not realise. Of sin conceived of as misery, as the evil which wrecks human life, as a burden which man helplessly and hopelessly tries to throw off, no sadder, and, so far as it goes, no truer picture can be given than in the religion of the Bouddha; of moral evil, again, as a dualism in the very being of man, a strife between the lower and the higher, in which the lower too often is supreme, of this, Greek Ethics can tell us almost as much as we know to-day; while in the later Stoicism, that conception of moral evil as the violation of the law of the universe, of the immanent reason of nature and of man, brings out a new and deeper thought. But sin as sin we do not, I think, meet with, apart from the belief in a Personal God. We are so familiar with it that we often read it where it is not. But it has come to us as the obverse of the Revelation of Jehovah in the Old Testament, and it has deepened and expanded as that older revelation unfolded into the revelation of God in Christ.

It has sometimes seemed to me as if it might help

us to realise the meaning of this conviction of sin under the influence of God's Holy Spirit, if we were to get quite away from theological language and put to ourselves some such case as this. Suppose that I have, as we say, taken a dislike to one of whom I know little, one of those unreasonable dislikes which are certainly not less real because they are unreasonable. Well, everything, when I have got to this point, seems to justify me in my first impression: trivial actions, words, expressions, all of them seem to be interpretable on one hypothesis and only one, that the man dislikes me and would do me a mischief if he could. Slowly the unkind feeling in my heart breaks out into overt act. It is in my power to do him a wrong; the temptation is too strong for me and I give way and am half ready to justify myself in what I have done. No doubt in my more moral moods my conscience would accuse me. I should feel that nothing could excuse my act, even as an act of retaliation; there would be the beginnings of regret, if not self-reproach. Now, suppose that in some way it came to my knowledge that this fancied enemy had never been an enemy to me at all,—nay, had been sacrificing himself in many little unknown ways to do me a service; that even when he found that I disliked him and had wronged

him, he still tried, as it were, to break down my enmity by new kindnesses, is it not quite clear that the feelings with which I should look back on what I had done would undergo a change? I should hate and despise myself, and should feel, if there was anything of goodness left in me, that I was unworthy to come near him whom I had wronged, that I durst not look him in the face. And if still he seemed to have but the one wish to make me his friend, and tried every means to bring me near him, and almost compelled me, in spite of myself, to know what he really is and had been all through, then the shame and the self-loathing and the hatred of what I had been would reach its climax, and every act of his would seem to make me hate myself the more and wish to tell him all that I had been. Certainly I should not minimise my wrong-doing. Rather, I should be inclined to make my fault out greater, more utterly inexcusable than it was, and long to show by my future relations with him, whose kindness had broken down my dislike, how real my sorrow was.

Brethren, such a divine forgiveness is rare amongst men; but surely if we could imagine such a case it would be a true, if an imperfect, picture of the process by which man has learned the wickedness of sin.

'Father, forgive them,' Christ said upon the Cross, 'for they know not what they do.' No, the sinner never knows quite what sin is till he knows God as Love; and with the knowledge of what God is comes that hatred of sin which is inseparable from a true knowledge of its nature. Long ago men knew that sin was wrong, that it was a violation of law, an act which degraded the doer. In the light of revelation they see it as it is, the rejection of Infinite Love.

It is because the Holy Spirit brings home to the world the infinite love of God that He convicts of sin. We go on in our ordinary lives, even we who have been taught the faith from our childhood; we go on with more or less regard for other people, no doubt, with more or less conformity to the religious practices of the day, but often without that direct personal relation with God which constitutes religion. And when we hear men talk of 'sin,' we either let it pass by unnoticed, or we interpret it as a sort of religious name for moral evil or the transgression of human law. We do not closely analyse the feeling of self-reproach which follows on an act of wrong; we do not often try and distinguish between fear of detection and loss of man's esteem and hatred of wrong-doing; still less do we try to get at the root of the matter and ask what it is in relation to God.

And when that truth of revelation is forced upon us, that all sin is, positively, the rejection of God's love, and, negatively, separation from Him, one of two things happens: we *hate the sin* or we *hate God*, and banish Him from our thought. And in either case the new truth has had its effect. We are not what we were. We are broken down by that love which we now see to have been circling round us even while we had no thought of God as a power in our lives, or we wilfully turn away and seek for some explanation of evil less hateful, less humiliating than that of sin.

The world, I said at the beginning, is that κόσμος of forces which in the individual Christian, or in the world outside, struggles against God. The mission, or one part of the mission of the Holy Spirit, is to convince this world of sin, to bring into antithesis, as they had not been brought before, good and evil, light and darkness, love and selfishness. And so inevitable is that contrast, that we may infallibly measure our knowledge of God by our attitude in regard to sin. And perhaps the surest sign of the change which the Spirit of God works in our conception of sin is that we come to think of sin always and everywhere as *sin against God*. The distinction between sins against man and God fades away. Every

sin we now see is a sin against God. So it was when the royal adulterer came to himself and knew what he had done. Adultery, treachery to a faithful soldier, murder,—these he had been guilty of, but one thought towered above all: 'I have sinned against the Lord.' 'Against *Thee, Thee only* have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.' Such a change passed over the mind of Saul of Tarsus. He had cruelly persecuted men who at least were conscientious in their belief; but in the light which shone upon him on the way to Damascus he knew it, not as cruelty and intolerance, but as *sin*. 'I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest.'

The conception of sin, it is sometimes said, is at the root of Christianity. That is a false statement of a truth. For sin only becomes sin, is only known to us *as sin*, in the light of that which is the heart and centre of Christianity, the belief in a Personal God, Who is a God of Infinite Love. All the other truths of Christianity grow out of and gather round that central truth—the doctrine of the Trinity, which safeguards the eternal truth that God is Love; the Incarnation, wherein the infinite love of God is fully declared to man; the Church and Sacraments, whereby God, Who is very Love, would unite us with Himself in the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ; the mission

of the Holy Spirit to bring home to us that love, and with it as a necessary consequence the consciousness of sin.

It follows, if this is true, that our knowledge of God as a Personal Being with Whom the soul of man can be in direct communion, and the knowledge of sin, will grow side by side.

It is the Holy Spirit alone which can reveal this knowledge to us. Let us not shrink from this, His first lesson, painful and humiliating as it may be to us to learn it; for only when we have learnt it will He lead us further onwards, into all truth, that we may know the things which were freely given us of God.

# XVII.

## OUR JUDGMENTS OF OTHERS.[1]

'*Judge not.*'—St. Matt. vii. 1.

We have already noticed the very practical character of the teachings of these Sundays after Trinity. It seems as if, after following each event in the Life and Death of our Lord, His Resurrection and Ascension, and the coming of the promised Comforter, and summing up our belief in His Divinity in the great doctrine of the Trinity, we were called back at once to earthly things and daily duties, as though to remind us how worthless is a knowledge of these great truths if they do not work upon and influence our lives. Among these practical duties which rest on the great truths of Christianity, love, of course, stands first, and S. John, the Apostle of love, is chosen to be our teacher. 'Beloved, let us love one another,' were the first words of the Epistle for the First Sunday after Trinity. 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the

[1] Preached on Fourth Sunday after Trinity, Whitehall, 1888.

brethren,' we had the Sunday before last. Then came a lesson of humility from S. Peter; and to-day, from our Lord's own lips, in the Gospel we have the command, 'Judge not.'

Judge not! And there is hardly one among us who is not proud of his cleverness and acuteness in judging. Ours is a critical age, and we most of us have learned how to criticise. It has been raised to a science. We can distinguish the false from the true, the impostor from the honest man. We can put the motive to everything that is done. We can estimate character we can measure the degrees of virtue and of vice,—nay, so clever have we grown in this accomplishment, that we discover things that never existed, see unkindness where none was meant, deceit and hypocrisy in the honest and the true, selfishness in some act of generosity which we cannot otherwise account for. Strangely out of harmony with the tone of our day are those words of Christ, 'Judge not.'

Judge not, for two or three simple reasons, of which we may all with profit remind ourselves.

1. *Because we cannot judge aright.* Even when there is no beam in our own eye to obscure our vision, and no want of charity to bias our judgment, we cannot truly judge of the motives which are at

work in another. A very little experience of the world teaches us how utterly at fault we generally are in our estimate of the character of others. We get to understand more and more that the very bad are not without redeeming points, and the very good still have their faults; and so age and experience, if nothing else, lead us to recognise the wisdom of those lines of the poet:—

> 'He only judges right who weighs, compares,
> And, in the sternest sentence which his voice
> Pronounces, ne'er abandons Charity.' [1]

The French have a motto to the effect that 'to know everything is to forgive everything.' And if this is not literally true, at least it embodies a truth, which we are slow enough to admit, that we often judge by the outside fact and give no credit for the hidden motive. If we cannot judge ourselves and our own motives, if even those dearest to us cannot 'know half the reasons why we smile or sigh,' [2] how is it possible for us to judge those from whom we are separated by some fancied wrong, or whom we approach, not in sympathy, but in an attitude of hostile criticism. The harsh and ready judgments which constantly rise to our lips or thoughts are for the most part as unscientific as they are uncharitable. 'Men

[1] Wordsworth.

[2] Keble, *The Christian Year*, 24th Sunday after Trinity.

who see *into* their neighbours,' says an acute observer of human nature,[1] 'are very apt to be contemptuous; but men who see *through* them find something lying behind every human soul which they cannot judge and dare not sneer at.' We cannot judge men's souls; we can judge their acts, and often judge them wrongly. Here, then, is the first reason for great carefulness in our judgment of others, their acts and motives, especially when we suspect ourselves of prejudice. No one can really judge of character who is not himself a moral man. That is not metaphysics but common-sense, though you will find it in Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Ethics*. A good man may sometimes be deceived. We cannot judge as God judges, cannot fathom all the depths of the human soul, or unravel the complicated web of motives, and, therefore, without the protection of the charity that thinks no evil we are certain to judge amiss. Do you remember the advice of the poet Burns to the rigidly righteous—

'One point must still be greatly dark,
The moving why they do it;
And just as lamely can ye mark,
How far, perhaps, they rue it.

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord, its various tone,
Each spring, its various bias:

[1] Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Then at the balance let 's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What 's done we partly may compute,
But know not what 's resisted.'

2. Judge not, again, for the simple reason that it is the very worst policy possible. This consideration our Lord Himself admits: 'Judge not, and ye shall not be judged.' The man who judges harshly will be harshly judged. It is the way of the world. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again by your brother-men. The censorious, the uncharitable, those who are always imagining unkindness where there is none, very naturally suggest in men's minds the thought that they judge others by themselves. But he who has always a good word to say of another will find but few critics and many friends. I was much struck by a chance remark made to me by a friend not long ago. Speaking of a neighbour, he said: 'He seems a good sort of man. I never heard him speak against any one; and that is the kind of man I like.'

There is a curious old Persian fable which runs thus:—A crowd was gathered in the street around a loathsome object. It was a dead dog, which had been dragged through the mud by a halter. 'What a foul sight!' said one. 'How it pollutes the air!' said another. 'No doubt it was hung for stealing,' said another. One only looked compassionately on the

dead creature, and said: 'Look at its teeth, they are white as pearl.' And the crowd turned round in astonishment, and said: 'Who is this? It must be Jesus of Nazareth, for only He could see something to approve even in a dead dog.' It is a quaint old story which, legendary though it is, shows how tradition seized on that characteristic of the Lord of Love, the desire to see the good in everything. Apart altogether from the fact that to refrain from harsh judgment is a Christlike thing, it is the secret of happiness in life. The man who desires to live and would fain see good days, will do wisely to remember the Psalmist's warning, and refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.[1] The suspicious man is always unhappy, and he who is always attributing unkind feelings to others, and fancying all men are his enemies, is going the right way to make his prophecies come true. 'With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.'

3. Judge not, once more, because if you are honest with yourself, you *dare* not judge. To judge, you must yourself be at least free from the sin which you profess to judge. 'He that is without sin among you,' was the stern rebuke of the Lord Jesus, 'let him first

[1] Psalm xxxiv. 12, 13.

cast a stone.' 'Thou hypocrite! cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.' Judge not. It is God's prerogative. 'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.' What if the Master should judge us, as we are so ready to judge our fellow-men? What if God should take us at our word, and forgive us *as* we forgive those who trespass against us?

> 'Oh! what are we,
> Frail creatures as we are, that we should sit
> In judgment, man on man? and what were we,
> If the All-merciful should mete to us
> With the same rigorous measure wherewithal
> Sinner to sinner metes?'

In that wonderful scene in Shakespeare's *Henry VI.*, the death of Cardinal Beaufort, this Christian fear of an unkind judgment is strongly marked in every utterance of the king. The Cardinal lies hopeless, despairing, in the agonies of remorse, wrestling with the death he dare not meet. In vain the king adjures him—

> 'Lord Cardinal, if thou thinkest on heaven's bliss,
> Hold up thy hand; make signal of thy hope.' [1]

In vain. He dies and makes no sign, and one

[1] *King Henry VI.*, Part II. Act iii., *ad fin.*

who stands near is ready with the harsh judgment, 'So bad a death argues a monstrous life.' So it seems to him; but the king checks him with a 'right-royal veto,'

'Forbear to judge, for we are sinners all.'

Judge not. It is unscientific; it is unwise; it is wrong. You dare not, if you remember that with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again, not by your fellow-men alone, but by God, the Judge of all.

Be ye therefore merciful, and judge not. Above all, do not put down to malice and unkind feeling what is perhaps an error of judgment, or the natural result of bad breeding or want of refinement. Half, and more than half, the quarrels in the world are owing to the fact that men will assume a fault in the heart, where there was only a fault in the head. One of the hardest lessons we have to learn is to give those who differ with us credit for just as much earnestness, just as much honesty as we have ourselves. Surely this unwillingness to judge another ought to show itself most conspicuously amongst those who are working for God in different ways, not making them indeed indifferent as to the way in which they work, but teaching them to believe that others may be working

too, just as heartily and just as truly for the same God. Divisions in Christendom, no less than divisions in the world and in society, might be almost done away, if in our daily life we could carry with us the Lord's command, 'Judge not.'

And then this command, 'Judge not,' ought surely to have a special meaning for us Christians in our dealings with those who stand outside the faith we love. It is so easy to shut ourselves up in the fortress of Faith, and in calm and often unintelligent security to judge those who are not able to receive 'the truth as it is in Jesus.' We Christians believe that we hold the key to the weary problems which are ever meeting us in the world; not that we have a cut-and-dried explanation, but that we hold a clue which in God's good time will guide us to a solution of them. And if by God's goodness we have been able to get a little light on those deep problems, then what must necessarily be our attitude towards those who are wrestling with the same problems without that which has helped us? I am sure that a Christian who judges harshly of those who, not in wilfulness, but from real inability to receive it, reject the truth we love, cannot be one who knows really either the difficulties or the Christian answer to them. We Christians, let us confess it with all sorrow and humility, have often so taught

the faith, as to range against it much that is high and pure and noble. We have driven men from the faith by representing it as irrational, if not immoral; and we owe to God and to the faith we profess an act of reparation. There are two ways of passing judgment on those who stand outside the faith of the Church. The one is obvious and natural, but unchristian. It asks, 'What vital truths does this unbeliever reject? How far has he wandered from the truth? Is the reason of his error to be sought in secret sin or intellectual pride?' That is one way; and it is the way which is absolutely barred by the Lord's command, 'Judge not.' The other, which we are slowly learning, is to ask, 'What is the truth which he who rejects our faith has seized? Why, if it is a truth, could he not find it in the gospel of Jesus Christ? How have we failed in setting forth that truth, and so left our brother unappealed to and unclaimed?' I do not mean that unbelief is not in far more cases than the unbeliever thinks due to causes within his own control, but our duty is to see wherein we have failed to win him, and with regard to those who reject the faith, to remember the Lord's command, 'Judge not.'

# XVIII.

## THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.[1]

*'Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.'*
—Acts xiii. 38.

It is recorded of the Emperor Constantine that, in his later days, when he was nominally a Christian but not yet baptized, he was oppressed by the memory of a great crime in the past—the murder of his eldest son Crispus. In his remorse his thoughts turned back to the religion he professed to have renounced. He applied to the Flamens at Rome for purification, and their answer was, 'Our religion knows of no expiation for such a crime.' He turned, it is said, to philosophy, to Sopater, the representative of the Platonists of Alexandria, and the same answer is given: 'There is no pardon, no hope.' Then one—perhaps Bishop Hosius of Cordova—reminded him that in that very region where heathen religion and heathen philosophy had failed, the triumphs of Christ had

[1] Preached at Whitehall, July 1, 1888.

been won. 'In Christianity there is forgiveness for every sin. The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.' And the royal murderer bowed his head in the presence of such infinite love, and he received the washing of regeneration and became the first Christian Emperor.

Whatever be the literal truth of that old story, it at least shows us how the Christian doctrine of forgiveness struck the imagination of a heathen historian. Christianity, with its strange, unearthly teaching about purity and holiness, yet held out its hand to those whom the world calls lost. And all through the fifteen centuries and a half which have passed since the days of Constantine, Christianity in every form, even its most perverted form, is known as *the Gospel of Forgiveness.*

That truth, the possibility of forgiveness for all, stands out on every page of our Gospels in defiance, as it were, of human judgments and human law, even when they seem to express a righteous sentence.

Turn to one or two of those familiar scenes in the Gospels.

I see before me a sinful woman, an outcast from society, despised by those who, if not over-moral themselves, yet shudder at the thought of open and proclaimed sin. She has forced her way in among

the guests of a feast, and there, bathed in tears, she is seen anointing the Saviour's feet. Does He know? men ask. Is He conscious how near He is to defiling sinfulness? Has He any idea who and what manner of woman she is? Yes! He knows, and therefore He speaks those strange words: 'Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much.'

Another scene appears. He Who sat an honoured guest at Simon's feast is now a malefactor condemned to die. Sanhedrim and Roman Procurator have agreed together, 'Let Him be crucified!' And as the nails are driven home the long-silent Sufferer speaks, and His words are shaped into a prayer, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

And yet once more. The scene is Calvary still. The three crosses are upraised. Three human forms are stretched upon them in the agonies of death. From two, at least, of those three sufferers the law of society exacts its rightful penalty. They were robbers, most likely murderers. There is no suggestion that they had not deserved their sentence. Their death is to be a useful deterrent to others who might otherwise be the pests of society. And yet to one of those two robbers the Sinless One addresses words of

pardon and hope and peace; 'This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.'

And side by side with those great acts of infinite love—the pardon of the woman who was a sinner, of the soldiers who crucified, of the repentant thief—we cannot but put that parable which, perhaps more than any other, has wrought itself into the consciousness of Christendom, the story of the Prodigal Son. He had broken through laws human and divine; he had devoured his patrimony in shameful sin; and yet for him there waited still the robe, the ring, the kiss, the welcome to the father's home.

And this Christian teaching of forgiveness, so wonderful in itself, stands out in sharp relief by contrast with what we find elsewhere.

1. *There is no forgiveness in the physical world.* Explain it as we may, there is no fact which has been brought out more clearly to view by the careful study of nature than the heartlessness, the relentlessness of nature. Everywhere it is 'red in tooth and claw with ravine.' The weak perish, the strong survive. The many are crushed, the few rise triumphant. And the more entirely we have accustomed ourselves to think of nature as a system of forces under the cold and icy reign of law, the more are we struck by its mercilessness, its hardness, its stern severity.

There is no forgiveness in nature. It never pardons a false move. The neglect of the laws of health brings its own punishment. The guilty and the innocent perish alike. We cannot escape. If we conquer nature, it is only by obeying her. If she seems to be our servant, it is because we have learnt her secret and conformed to her law.

2. And as there is no forgiveness in nature, so is there *no forgiveness in human law.* The judge must be the impartial administrator of a law he does not make. To relax that law would be to be false to his trust. The judge, like the priest, is doubly representative. He is God's minister, bearing not the sword in vain, ordained of God to defend the moral law; he is the representative of the community, enforcing their moral judgment, the judgment of their conscience as expressed in the law of the land; but he is the minister of justice, not of mercy. He has no right to forgive, to dispense with obedience to law. He must exact the penalty. The admission of extenuating circumstances, like the recognition of equity as supplementing law, is merely the admission that in some cases the law does not apply, and therefore the offender is exempt from its operation. But forgiveness is not for the judge.

3. Again: there is *no forgiveness in conscience.*

This is only what we should expect, since the judgment of conscience lies behind the judgment of law. Conscience does not pardon; it condemns. It tells of sin, of a broken law, of guilt incurred, of judgment to come. Its last word is *fear*. The more clear its vision of the moral law, the more terrible is the contrast between what I am and what I ought to be. All the sins of the past, hidden far back in the days that are gone, one by one conscience drags them out, summons them before me, compels me to look at them. They are forgotten, not forgiven. Is there forgiveness? Conscience knows not. Only it knows that sin is sin, and the wages of sin is death. And so conscience makes cowards of us all.

And yet that which man finds not in the laws of nature, and allows not in the law of justice, and seeks in vain in the voice of conscience, is the Alpha and Omega of the Christian Revelation. In one word, it is *Forgiveness*. It is forgiveness that Christ won for man by the death of the Cross; it is in forgiveness that all the highest possibilities of goodness in human nature have their source. 'Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace.' Go forward to the new life of earnest effort for God and man, free from 'the clogging burden of a guilty soul.'

And all this we are now told is immoral. Nature

is right, the judge is right, conscience is right. But religion is wrong, for it teaches forgiveness; it teaches the possibility of salvation for the vilest, and this is fatal to morality. No wonder men are careless of the lives they live, if even in the moment of death they may repent and be saved. Teach men, it is said, that punishment invariably follows evil-doing, and there is some hope that they will live moral lives, but this doctrine of forgiveness encourages immorality.

Such an attack, and it has been openly made of late, strikes at the very heart of Christianity. For not only is the gift of Divine forgiveness a distinguishing mark of the gospel, but the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Atonement, whatever be their wider and deeper meaning, find their reality for most of us in this, that they have won for man forgiveness. Thus the very existence of Christianity is bound up with its teaching as to forgiveness, and this, we are told, is not *untrue* but *immoral*. The objection is supposed to come, not from the speculative reason, but from the conscience; and it is a protest which, if it exist, can neither be ignored nor explained away. An intellectual difficulty may be left to wait for a solution. We may believe that there is an answer even if as yet we do not know it.

But the protest of conscience is final. If a doctrine is immoral, it is false.

Is, then, forgiveness immoral? It is a question which for most of us can hardly be said to have a meaning. It is like asking, 'Is friendship a good thing, when friends so often deceive?' No doubt the great truth of forgiveness has again and again been perverted into an excuse for sin. It has been made an anæsthetic of the conscience. It has destroyed souls. But over and over again it has been the beginning of a new moral life, the source and spring of moral effort in the lives which, without it, must have been wrecked and lost. If, in the physical world, men are destroyed for lack of knowledge, who shall count the numbers of those who in the moral world are destroyed for lack of *hope*? And the gospel of forgiveness is a gospel of *hope*, while the teaching which denies forgiveness is a message of *despair*.

There are some attacks on Christianity which may be left to refute themselves, and surely this attack upon the Christian doctrine of forgiveness is one of these. We only need to see the opposing view fairly stated, and we are ready to say, Give us the hope of forgiveness, with all its actual perversions, all its possible immorality, and still there will be a balance of moral gain as compared with a state which begins

with a denial of free-will and ends with the apotheosis of circumstances. In such a world there can be no morality—only useful or hurtful conduct.

But, in truth, this attack on the Christian doctrine of forgiveness would have no meaning and no force but for the fact that what should be the noblest boast of our religion is often perverted into its worst corruption. Men separate faith from practice, and set salvation over against morality, even as they sometimes make the service of God an excuse for neglecting the service of man. Christianity knows of none of these separations. Forgiveness is not a substitute for goodness; it is the setting loose of a new moral force, a new means of restoring in man, that which religion and morality alike seek to restore, the perfect character. If it is not this, it is not what Christianity means. Yet looking back over the history of the past,—nay, looking out into the world around us, we dare not deny that the great truth of forgiveness has been perverted, is being perverted, into a dangerous error, till, instead of being the mightiest of moral forces, it becomes a mere opiate of the conscience, and men go on sinning because God is so merciful.

Nor is this perversion of the truth of the gospel peculiar to any one group of professing Christians.

Let history witness. Four centuries ago Western Christendom was sunk in spiritual deadness and practical unbelief. In Christian Italy, the seat of the chief Bishop of the West, Italy of the Renaissance, might be seen side by side 'all that we love in art and all that we loathe in man.' It seemed as if, as in Samson's riddle, a swarm of bees had settled in a dead lion's carcass, and there was sweetness instead of strength, corruption in place of life. Can we wonder that in such a state of things each sin had its price, and the Divine gift of forgiveness, which Christ won upon the Cross, was purchased by money, and that by those who never dreamed of living the moral life. Against that false teaching about forgiveness the conscience of man rebelled. In the more earnest, less enervated northern races, a great moral revolt was at hand. The Dominican monk Tetzel, the pardoner, stirs up the fierce protest of an Augustinian friar. And Martin Luther revives the forgotten truth that God's gifts are without money and without price. It was a noble protest, but how short-lived! Even while he thinks he is magnifying the grace of God and the freedom of God's gift in Christ, he is dealing a blow at morality as deadly as that of him who would sell pardon for money. 'Sin lustily,' says Martin Luther. They are his own words, written from

the Wartburg in 1521;—'Sin lustily, but be more lusty in faith. It suffices that through the riches of the glory of God we know the Lamb Who taketh away the sins of the world. From Him no sin will sever us, though a million times a day we were guilty of fornication or murder.' They were dangerous words, and, little as Luther meant it, they were taken up by those who wished not to magnify God's love, but to make light of sin. Anything to escape the royal road of penitence and find a short cut to peace of mind and conscience. If that is Christianity, then, in the name of morality, perish Christianity! But our conscience tells us that a doctrine which is so hurtful to morality cannot have been taught by Christ, the All-holy and All-pure.

Yet that perversion of the Divine teaching of forgiveness is limited to no age, to no phase of Christianity. You may hear it to-day, shouted in the streets and defended on the platform. You may find it claiming for itself the exclusive title of 'gospel' teaching. Tetzel with his money-bags, Luther with his 'faith only,' the modern revivalist with his catchwords, 'Nothing to do; Christ has done all,' are unconsciously leagued together, like Pilate and Herod and Jewish Sanhedrim, against the truth of God. Surely Christ has died in vain if

this is what forgiveness means. Can we wonder that once more the conscience raises its protest against such teaching, and rejects it as immoral?

*What, then, is forgiveness?* It is nothing, worse than nothing, a delusion and a snare, if it leads us to think lightly of the sin for which Christ died upon the Cross, to treat it as a thing which can be simply flung aside, and leave us as if it had never been. It is nothing, worse than nothing, if it is not the counterpart of new affections and a changed will, the starting-point of a new life dedicated to the service of God and man, the setting free of new forces for the regeneration of the world. Surely it is a true instinct which leads us to measure faith by morals, religion by life, forgiveness by fact, which sees in the Christ-like character the only guarantee for pardoned sin.

Brothers and sisters, it rests with you, you who have felt in your own souls the fruit of Christ's sufferings, you who have known all the wealth of strength and peace and happiness which the Cross has brought into your lives, to free that glorious doctrine of Forgiveness from the false teaching which has gathered round it, and to justify it before the eyes of men. Go forth in all the strength and power of those whose burdens have fallen from them at the foot of the Cross; go forth like the racer who has laid

aside every weight; go and live the Christ-like life of service to men for the love of God. You have got your standard: Christ laid down His Life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. You have got your test as well: We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.

# XIX.

## THE CONTINUITY OF THE CHURCH IN FAITH AND LIFE.[1]

*'Others have laboured, and ye are entered into their labour.'*
—S. John iv. 38.

It is sometimes helpful to turn from matters of personal religion and to look at those wider issues with which, though less obviously, yet quite as really, our spiritual life is bound up. And perhaps those of us who are least ready and least willing to do this are those for whom it would be most really helpful, because they are the people sometimes who are in danger of becoming isolated, and therefore selfish, in their Christianity. We are 'members of Christ,' each one of us. That is the great foundation truth, the Christian's personal religion. We are 'members one of another.' That is the great truth which makes Christianity social as well as personal. We have sometimes heard it said that Christianity tends to

[1] Preached 7th October 1888.

what is called 'other-worldliness,' but makes men forget the duties which they owe to their fellow-men in the world. And that is because we can realise the fact that we are members of Christ, and yet forget what necessarily follows from it—that because we are members of Christ we are members one of another.

Another way of putting the same fact would be to say that we find it much easier to forget our corporate responsibilities than our personal responsibilities; and anything which strengthens the bond which binds man to man in common work, and common duties, and common interests, helps to keep our Christianity from becoming selfish, and therefore unchristian.

I want, then, to-day to ask you to take a wider outlook than we generally do, and see how much of what we value most in our spiritual possession we owe to those on whom we had no claim, except the common claim which Christ, as the perfect man, makes on man for his brother man. And I think we shall find that such a wider outlook will have two consequences—operating, no doubt, differently in different men, but having some influence on all. First, it will stir up in us something of greater thankfulness to God and to those who have been His instruments; and, secondly, it will lead quite naturally

to something of real, earnest effort to hand on—if not increased, at least unimpaired—the heritage which we have received from the past.

'Others have laboured, and ye are entered into their labour.' Did they, then, work for posterity? That is only in part true. They worked for God, or rather God worked in and through them for man, and we in God's providence reap the fruit of their work.

There is a well-known chapter in the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus[1] which begins, 'Let us now praise famous men and our fathers that begat us'; and if you turn to it you will find that the writer, the son of Sirach, had been speaking of the greatness of God as revealed in Nature, in the sun and the moon, in the beauty of heaven and the glory of the stars; in the rainbow, which 'compasseth the heaven about with a glorious circle'; in the thunder, and the snow, and the hail; in the sea, with its strange and wondrous progeny; and he concludes by reminding us how far greater and more glorious is the Creator than His creation. 'We have seen but a few of His works,' he says, yet we know that He is 'terrible and very great, and marvellous is His power.' Therefore, he says, 'when ye glorify the Lord, exalt Him as much as ye can.'

[1] Ecclesiasticus xliii. xliv.

From Nature the son of Sirach turns to man, not to contrast the littleness of man with the greatness of God's works in Nature, nor yet, as a modern writer might do, to glorify man for his triumphs over Nature. Instead of that, he turns quite naturally and simply from Nature to man as to another sphere in which God's greatness reveals itself. 'Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us. The Lord hath wrought great glory by them through His great power from the beginning.' And at once he goes on to speak of Noah and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, of Moses and Aaron and Phineas, of Joshua and Caleb, the heroes of the wilderness wanderings, of the prophets and the great King David, down to the times of Simon, son of Onias. In all these 'famous men,' no less than in the grandeur of external Nature, the greatness of God is seen. 'The Lord wrought great glory by them.'

Some such retrospect with regard to the Church to which we belong is specially appropriate at the present time. Indeed, two recent events have almost forced it on us. A little while ago we heard a great deal about the proposed Disestablishment of the Church of England, and those who attacked and those who defended, to say nothing of those who merely looked on and read the newspapers, learned a great

deal that was new. They learned, or at least realised as they had not done before, that the Church of England was not founded at the Reformation or in the Middle Ages, but went far back beyond the age of Parliaments, back to the time when England had not yet a national unity. And when they got back to what is properly the beginning of the Church of England—the time of S. Augustine's mission in 597—they discovered that there was a Church *in* England before there was a Church *of* England, and that the National Church, when it came into full organised life in the seventh century, gathered up into itself the remains of the old British Christianity, and became the religion of all England under Archbishop Theodore.

And then, as if to bring all this truth that people had been discovering home to the imagination, we have had, just in the last few days, a gathering of Bishops of the Anglican Communion from all over the world; and yesterday[1] week the Archbishop of Canterbury, the ninety-fourth in succession in the Metropolitan See, sat in the chair of S. Augustine to welcome the representatives of the English Church at home and abroad. It was natural that his thoughts should go back, as they did, over thirteen hundred

[1] September 30th, 1888.

years, and he should speak of the wisdom of that great Bishop who sent S. Augustine, and the wise counsel which he gave for the guidance of the infant Church. For those were days when Rome did not lord it over God's people, and when the Bishop of Rome was the saintly Gregory, the evangelical Pope, who has been called the first of the Methodists.

We Churchmen of to-day, then, are heirs of more than thirteen centuries of Church life and teaching and experience: members of the same society, holding the same faith, governed by the same threefold ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons, admitted into the Church by the same Sacrament of Baptism, fed by the same spiritual food, going back even to the same source of doctrine and devotion, the Word of God, drawing our very life from the same Head, the God-man Jesus Christ. What do we owe to the past? What are we doing for posterity? Other men laboured; we have entered into their labour. Are we so labouring that the ages yet unborn will be able to look back to this age of ours, and in thankfulness to God say, 'See what our fathers did for us'?

(*a*) Think first of the continuity of the faith. That faith is gathered up in the doctrine of the Person of Christ as very God and very Man. It presupposes the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the

Church and Sacraments, and all that concerns personal religion flows from it. And perhaps it seems a simple thing to say that Christianity stands or falls with the belief in the Divinity of Christ. Yes, it is simple to us, because, thanks to the teaching of the Apostles and of the great Church Fathers, that doctrine has been made clear to us, gathered up and expressed in unmistakable terms by the great theologians of the fourth century, and safeguarded in the three Creeds. And so it was that in Reformation days the fathers of the English Reformation went back to the Bible and primitive Christianity as their test of truth in doctrine; and while, in Switzerland especially, new forms of Arianism arose, the English Church in the Articles claims the three Creeds as things which 'ought thoroughly to be received and believed.' So in the matter of the two great Sacraments. Abroad, the reaction from Romanism had driven many of the foreign Reformers to reduce the Sacraments to mere signs and symbols of realities which might or might not be there. But the fathers of the English Reformation held true to the ancient faith, and amid all the confusions of those troublous times, and all the misunderstandings which false teaching had engendered, dared to say, 'Seeing now this child is by baptism regenerate'; 'The body of Christ is given,

taken, and eaten in the Supper,' though 'only after a heavenly and spiritual manner.' So did the Reformers hold the faith against Popery on one side and Puritanism on the other; and we have entered into their labours.

What should we have thought if the English Church had given way to the forces which were directed against her—if she had compromised this truth and minimised that, and thrown a haze over all? We should have said she had been false to God and man, unworthy of the high trust committed to her keeping. And yet is not that just what so many of us are doing now? We whom after ages will look back to and judge, we who inherited entire the faith of the gospel, what are we doing to keep it and hand it on, to realise it in our own lives and teach it to our children?

The faith of Christ, remember, is supernatural: not merely implying a belief in the supernatural at its centre or its source, but supernatural from first to last. And that is what our day dislikes most. It does not like to be told that man cannot will himself into the life of God, cannot drift into it on the tide of time, cannot grow into it by ordinary processes of natural evolution, but that man needs a Saviour, needs to be lifted out of himself, to receive a new

nature that he may live the Divine life. Yet this is the heritage of truth which all through the ages, in times of spiritual deadness or violent reaction, our fathers kept for us. We have entered into their labour. Where shall we find those who will labour for the generations yet unborn? Which of us will take his part with the 'famous men,' famous in the roll of God's great ones, by whom He will work His glory?

(β) And passing from the continuity of faith, let us think for a moment of the continuity of the Church's life and work. Changes pass, and must pass, over the life of a nation, over our modes of thought and feeling, our methods of dealing with those forces of evil which ruin life. And yet, running through all these changes, we can trace a unity in the *life* of the Church and the self-sacrificing *work* of those who labour for her. There were days when true religion and sound learning seemed best served by the founding of monastic institutions; and kings and nobles, self-sacrificing clergy and laymen, vied with one another in dedicating their property to God for a perpetual alms! Those days passed away. The monastic system had done its work. The nation was entering on a new era, and it is easy for us to point out the inadequacy of monasticism to the new needs,

and forget the work it had done when neither Education Acts nor Poor Laws existed. But when the monasteries fell, the self-sacrifice of the children of the Church had not ceased. Their liberality had been diverted by the wisdom of men like Bishop Fisher and Cardinal Wolsey into new channels. The Church was not afraid to be abreast of the age—did not shrink from claiming the new learning as its own, as capable of being used for the work of God. This was the great age of colleges as we now understand them, of professors, of schools. But it would be a false and superficial view to say that education was taking the place of devotion, or that men aimed at a learned rather than a religious life. Is there not a danger of a like false judgment being passed on the changes of our day? We, too, are going through a transition period. The faith of Christ is no longer 'protected' as it once was. We see Board Schools and Dissenting Schools working on the same level with Church Schools. Even in our Universities there are no longer 'tests.' They are open to men of all religions and no religion. And there are plenty of people ready to tell us that the secularisation of Church property is the only logical conclusion. But the question for us is not, What is God preparing for us in the future? but, How are we to labour in the

present as those laboured whose work we have inherited? How can we act worthily of those who lived and wrought for God in the times past? Each age has its problems which it must boldly face. And what is ours? We are heirs of 'famous men' of old; we have entered into their labour; we have seen the great glory which God wrought by them. Is there no glory that He is waiting to work out by us? Remember, continuity does not mean a stereotyped uniformity. In a living organism it means *growth*, and growth implies adaptation to new conditions. Three centuries ago Christianity dared to leave the shade of the monastery and boldly to lay its hand on that new learning which was being turned elsewhere against the faith. It dared to claim it for God, instead of despairing, or protesting, or giving way. And in these days we seem called upon to take a further step. We are bidden to go forward and face error and vice in the mere strength of truth and a holy life—to meet the world, as it were, on equal terms, save that in our ears those words keep ringing: 'Greater is He that is for you than all that can be against you'; 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'; 'Lo, I am with you alway.' Through eighteen hundred years Christ's promises have proved true. Is God less able than of old to raise up famous men

for after ages to praise? And does it not seem as if already we could see the lines along which He is leading us? Every year seems to throw more and more on voluntary effort. And what does that mean? Does it not mean that God wills the work to be done, the burden to be borne, more equally. And are not Christian teachers right in saying to us that England's Church expects every Churchman to do his duty. If we hear less of great endowments, we hear more of widely diffused interest and effort. Churchmen are beginning to understand that they cannot afford to lose the privilege of helping on God's work, and showing their gratitude for the labours of those who are gone, by handing on to posterity the gifts and privileges which they have enjoyed.

It may be that more yet will be thrown on voluntary efforts of Churchmen and Churchwomen. It may be that much which from old association we value must yet be sacrificed—that the Church may go forth clothed only in the simple majesty of truth, and yet resting on the omnipotence of her Divine commission and the allegiance of her children. I am sure those who laboured for us in the past would have shrunk from no sacrifice but the sacrifice of truth, and therefore God blessed their work, and we have entered into it.

As we draw near to the altar of our God and

commemorate the faithful dead, we are taught to say, We also bless Thy Holy Name for all Thy servants departed this life in Thy faith and fear, beseeching Thee to give us grace so to follow their good example that with them we may be partakers of Thy heavenly kingdom.' *With them*, working in their spirit, in their faith, in their power, but by other methods, as in the Church of the Old Testament the patriarchs, the lawgivers, the generals, the kings, the prophets, were the means by which God worked, amid different circumstances and in the face of different dangers, to show His glory,—*with them*, into whose labours we have entered in this Church of England—'the fathers who begat us,' the missionaries who founded, the monks who preserved, the educators who reformed and taught, the saintly men who in a time of deadness and coldness kept alive the supernatural life, the revivers of personal religion in the last century, and the more Catholic teachers of to-day,—*with them*, in the unity of the faith, we are called to act by handing on in its purity and fulness the Church's truth and life. You and I are not called upon to be great men as the world counts greatness; but 'famous' in the annals of Christ's Church we may be, since God may work His glory through us as He did through the men of old.

I believe if the fathers that begat us can look upon us as we seek to follow in their steps, that which would seem to them to be the greatness of this age of ours would be, *not* the unfaltering FAITH of ancient days, the life which rested almost instinctively on the bosom of God—for the very air we breathe is charged with unbelief; *not* that strong UNITY which at one age of the Church opposed so firm a front against the powers of evil—for 'without are fightings and within are fears,' but what would seem to those famous men of old the greatness of our day would be, I believe, the wonderful readiness of real Churchmen to welcome all that is good and noble and true, all that in any region of life refines and purifies, all the manifold attempts at doing good, the earnest desire to enclose every fragment of true human activity in the net which gathers of every kind, to bring their own little bit of brightness or beauty or truth to the service of God and His Church, in the light of the Incarnation to believe that nothing need be common and unclean.

And I am sure that those to whom posterity will some day look back as the famous men of to-day, into whose work it is their privilege and their happiness to have entered, will be those whom, perhaps, their contemporaries hardly knew, but who dared in a time

of change to hold true to the faith, dared to do their little part in the work of God, dared, in what might have seemed the recklessness of faith, to claim the future for God, by consecrating to Him their present.

# XX.

## IMPATIENCE A BAR TO RELIGIOUS TRUTH.[1]

'*He that believeth shall not make haste.*'—ISAIAH xxviii. 16.

ONE of the common characteristics of our day is *impatience*. It is an age of hurry and excitement and rapid movement. We look back with much of wonder and something of scorn to the slow and clumsy methods of our forefathers. We do everything by machinery. We have learned that 'time is money, and to save time is to increase wealth.' We plough and reap by steam, we travel by express, we send messages by telegraph. We live at high pressure. We are anxious about visible results. And though the idea of growth and development by law is familiar to us in science, and in some respects is the dominant idea of the time, we are jealous of all that is slow and secret and without immediate effect, all that cannot justify itself to our hurrying life. And the result is a kind of mania for short cuts,—short cuts

[1] Preached 14th October 1888.

to knowledge, short and easy methods with opponents, the hastening of natural processes by artificial means, In our hold on truth the same impatience shows itself in the readiness to make some great reality which sends its tender roots down into every part of our being depend for its nourishment on a single fibre; to stake our all on a single argument abstracted from the whole; to make our soul's life depend upon a single strand rather than on the closely-twisted cord of mutually corroborative truths.

And all this impatience and hurry, which looks at first like a saving of waste and energy and time, is doing real devastating work in our physical and moral and intellectual life. It is worry and excitement, not steady work, that kills men; while in the moral and spiritual, no less than the intellectual region, there is nothing so unreal and destructive to what *is* real, as rapidly gained results.

In one department of our life, in which we all have some experience, more or less, the acquirement of knowledge, this is obviously true. Nobody really believes in 'cram,' no one really supposes that anything worthy of the name of knowledge can be put into a man from without. Facts may be, information may be, items producible in an examination-room may be, but not knowledge.

But this impatience is just as fatal and just as common in our religious life, making us fail to understand God's dealing with us and with mankind at large. For here the nearest parallel to God's working is what we call growth, a hidden, and, as it seems to us, a slow and weary process,—first the blade, then the ear, and, only after many days, the full corn in the ear. And we get impatient, and impatience is none the less a fault because the end for which we long is a good one. It is, indeed, much easier to desire the fulfilment of God's Will than to consent to see that Will realised in God's way. We forget that doing God's Will in our own way is doing our will, not His, after all.

This is represented in the Bible as the earliest form in which temptation comes to man. 'Ye shall be as gods,' said the tempter, 'knowing good and evil.' Surely God willed that those who had been made in His Image should become like Him. Yes; yet not by magical transformations but by gradual growth; and Adam and Eve were impatient of such a slow process. They would have become like God at once. So when they had sinned, they were driven from the garden, 'lest they should eat and live for ever.' Did not God will that they should live for ever? Yes; but the fallen must be restored, the marred image

must be sketched anew, the human must be taken into the Divine, and this needs a preparation, a discipline, a training, a growth,—first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear, which should fall into the ground and die, that it might bear much fruit.

Thus we are not surprised to find that impatience is a temptation which lies very near to those who are most earnest in God's work. Look at Moses and his disappointment, when he took it for granted that because he was the leader chosen by God the people would recognise him in a moment as the destined deliverer. 'He thought they would have known how that God by his hand would deliver them.' Or look at Elijah after the miracle on Mount Carmel. When sick at heart he prays for death. 'I am not better than my fathers.' The momentary enthusiasm passed, there was no wholesale conversion, the prophet did not know, or perhaps thought little of, the seven thousand faithful ones over whom God watched in patient love. Or think how often David wearied himself with the problem of the prosperity of the wicked. Why does a God of Righteousness suffer it? It was not till he put aside his impatient fretting at successful wickedness that he began to understand. 'Then thought I to understand this; but it was too hard for me till

I went into the sanctuary of God. Then I understood.'

Or, listen again to Isaiah as he prays: 'Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy Presence.' God came down; but there were no rending heavens or riven mountains; and the world did not know that in the Child of Bethlehem it had received its God.

And it was those who most fully realised Who Jesus Christ was who were most anxious for His victory over the world, who were most impatient, and by reason of their impatience unable to understand the method and meaning of the regeneration of humanity. Wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom unto Israel?' they asked. 'Wilt Thou that we call down fire from heaven on those who will not receive Thee?' They had realised what has been called the dramatic tendency in the history of the world, and knew that the Incarnation was its goal; and it seemed as if there was nothing now to come but the immediate conversion of the nations and the triumph of Israel under the Messianic rule, and the destruction of the enemies of Christ. It was their impatience that made them so slow to realise the fact that that which was the goal of all past history was the starting-point of a

new development, a new and supernatural growth in human nature, which, like hidden leaven, was to act gradually on the mass around. They knew that the Church was the kingdom of God, heaven upon earth, that they were already regenerated into a Divine life; but they had yet to learn how much of evil there was within them yet to be transformed, yet to learn that the world and the Church were not mutually exclusive, but that within the visible Church, as within the Christian soul, the evil is still mingled with the good. Shall we then not try and separate them? Why let wheat and tares grow together? Why not a Church of the sinless? and the exclusion or the extrusion of the sinner? Once more impatience barred the way to truth. Montanism at first, Puritanism from the days of the Reformation to our own, would have hastened Christ's kingdom by earthly and human methods. But the Montanist and Puritan idea is not the idea put forward by our Lord in the Gospels. He spoke of the tares growing with the wheat, of the net which gathered of every kind, of a kingdom of saints who were not all holy, even as in the inner circle of the chosen twelve one betrayed and one denied, and all forsook Him in the moment of danger. Christ never represents His Church as exclusively composed of good people; and, as S. Augustine says, 'We have

no right to separate ourselves and seek to live apart with none but those who are holy as the angels.' We start with false and pious notions of God's dealings with man, and are impatient when His methods are seen to be so gradual, so unlike what we should have adopted; and just as fretting leads to evil, so impatience makes us doubt whether a process which is so slow, which conforms so little to the tests we naturally lay down, can really be in truth Divine.

There are three great questions in relation to which this impatient tendency leads men to misjudge, and finally, perhaps, to reject, God's revelation of Himself: the conversion of the world, the revelation of truth, the progress of the individual soul.

I. In history we see the nations of the world feeling after God, if haply they might find Him. We see perverted and degraded forms of worship—nature worship, ancestor worship, fetichism, polytheism, what not; we see philosophy slowly rising up to the truth of the unity of God, and yet in the very process of realising His unity losing its hold on the vital truth of His personality. And among all the nations of the world we see one only, an insignificant people, singled out to be, in the fulness of time, the religious teacher of mankind, the keeper of the oracles of God. And only after the world had been

prepared by the religion of Israel and the philosophy of Greece, was the one religion, of which all others are the prophecies and shadows, given in the Person of Jesus Christ. Nineteen centuries Christianity has been in the world, and 'we see not yet all things put under Christ': not only Christian nations, but even the Church itself, has again and again fallen back, forgotten its high mission, pandered to worldly love of power, or acquiesced in the world's standards of living. And people ask: How can the religion which has done so little be from God? If it had been from God, it must have made more way; it must have had a triumphant course. ('If God had made a revelation to the world,' said a great infidel, 'he would have written it upon the sun.') The assumption which underlies such a criticism, and which so often paralyses faith in individuals, is, when it is dragged out to the light, not only not a necessary assumption, but is contrary to what God does in the world of nature, and no less opposed to what He does in the individual soul. The struggle for existence which shows itself as growth means a very slow and painful triumph of the fit over the unfit; the progress of holiness, if by God's grace we have advanced in it, is a slow and painful victory over the daily besetting sins; and the progress of the Church in the world is

slow and painful too. 'He that believeth will not make haste.' He will see in that slow, toilsome progress, not the weakness of God, or the failure of His love, but a very real and present proof of the reality of sin as that which limits and thwarts the love of God. That principle which some people brand by the hated term sacerdotalism is simply the method which the love of God has chosen for the regeneration of the world—first, a people are chosen to a priesthood among the nations; then a Christian Church, to be, not the limiting of God's love, for God's love is large as humanity, but the centre from which, as from leaven hidden in meal, assimilating influences should go forth into the world. 'God's purpose is larger than His Church on earth;'[1] yet it is because He loves all, that He has planted in the midst of the world a Divine society to be the witness of His love, the guardian of His truth, the fulfiller of His purpose. And when men see how slow and painful is its progress, they forget how real and deep is the alienation of man from God, forget the awful limiting power of sin, 'the block of blind and heedless ignorance,'[2] the selfishness and self-love which strives against the love of God, and in their impatience they say: 'The Church has failed. It cannot be from God. We

[1] Gore, *Ministry*, p. 45. [2] Holland, *Creed and Character*, iv.

must try some new and more successful method if we are to convert the world.' Brethren, is your faith and knowledge strong enough to resist that temptation? It is harder sometimes to *wait* than to *work*, to bide God's time. It is only those who believe who can dare to look out upon what men call the failure of Christianity, and yet still work the work that God has given them, without hurry and without flurry, without the panic-stricken fear which is so frequent in our day. There are always to be found those, good earnest people often,

> 'whose best hope for the world
> Is ever that the world is near its end;
> Impatient that the stars their courses keep,
> And make no pathway for the coming Judge.'

But 'he that believeth will not make haste,' and they who are strong enough, without haste or anxiety, to do God's work are those who have learned the secret of the faith.

II. Again, in the revelation of truth this impatience bars the way to true knowledge. Truth is the very idol of our day, truth in nature, truth in practice. And in every region except religion men know that impatience makes the searcher blind to the truth he seeks. They have seen the patient student, slowly accumulating his facts and observations, hardly

daring to formulate a theory lest it should draw him aside, deliberately putting away from him grand and striking generalisations, and toiling up step by step from narrower to wider truths. But the moment men enter the region of religious truth all this scientific temper, all this scientfic method, is put aside or forgotten. It is assumed that a revelation from God must not only have come like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, but must come with overmastering force, and at once solve all questions and prejudge the problems of the speculative reason, and even perhaps provide us with a short cut to science. The Bible tells us that 'in the beginning God made the heaven and the earth,' and at once we assume that He made it just as we know it now; and when men read for us the record of the rocks, or in the light of observed facts formulate a theory as to the way in which God, through countless ages, created the world and man, we impatiently resent it, as if it were unworthy of the dignity of God to work by slow and gradual processes, or create according to a law of which we can trace the working. So, again, with all that large group of difficulties which turn upon the morality of acts or persons commended in the Old Testament. It is only slowly and painfully, and with much of risk and loss, that those who believe that

the Bible is the Word of God have come to understand, that it is not unworthy of God to restore man by the gradual unfolding of a perfect character to be realised in the fulness of time by His Son. We are impatient to antedate the final result, and to find the whole of the New Testament in the Old, though again and again our Lord contrasts them, not as false and true, but as lower and higher stages in a progressive revelation of moral truth, and we have to learn that there too 'he that believeth will not make haste.'

III. And, once more, with regard to the progress of the individual soul, the same impatience often grievously hinders the work of God. We believe in the Incarnation of the Eternal Word; we know that fallen humanity has been taken into God; we have felt the baptismal water on our foreheads, and know that we bear the sign which makes us one with Christ Himself. And in a moment we are met by the temptation: Surely if regeneration is real, we must feel and see at once the fruits of our regeneration; surely there must be some visible difference between baptized and unbaptized, or else what in every age the Church has taught about the grace of Baptism cannot be true; and then, perhaps, if we can recall a time when we consciously surrendered ourselves to God, we

look back to that as the real turning-point of our life, and ignore the great gift of 'that which by nature we cannot have.' Here, too, it is impatience which leads us astray. We cannot see, we can hardly believe possible, all those dim, mysterious workings of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, all that chaining of circumstances whereby God made it possible for us to surrender ourselves to His love; but the sudden change, the instantaneous conversion, satisfies our crude ideas of what God's work must be, and perhaps makes us forget that even the surrender of the will to God is but a step in an unending process of conversion from sin to God. Yet 'he that believeth,' he who has watched within him and around him the gradual and secret workings of God's love, 'will not make haste,' will neither look for nor expect immunity from effort, or freedom from sin. For he will have learned that every gift of God is given to us, not to dispense us from struggle, but to enable us to strive, not to transfer us in a moment from sin to holiness, but to make possible that transfiguration of life which is completed only beyond the veil.

And surely the two difficulties help to explain one another. If, in the world, the progress of Christ's Kingdom has been so slow, so often checked, so seldom dazzling the imagination by the brilliancy of

its triumphs, if evil is so real, so obstructive, so hampering—if we may use that word—to the cause of God, then at least we may take heart when we see the same rebellion in our own hearts, when we are tempted to be cast down because the love of God does not at once absorb our love and quicken our energies and strengthen our will. And conversely, if we have known the love of God, and recognised the power of Christ's Resurrection, and know that we are passed from death unto life, yet find ourselves let and hindered, the old evil sending out its creeping roots beneath the sod, the old desires wandering back to the evil we have abandoned, then mourn we may, strive we may, pray we may, but we cannot wonder that the triumphs of the Cross are so hardly won over the organised forces of evil in the world.

It is easy for those who do not know sin, who have not felt its awful, deadening, paralysing power in themselves, to wonder at the slow progress of good. But 'he that believeth' will give way neither to easy optimism, nor to despair of good. Not less earnestly, but more patiently, not less hopefully, but more trustfully, will he struggle against the sin which is within him and around him. He knows how real it is, how slow it is to yield to the love of God; but he knows, too, that God has laid a sure foundation in the

Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and though the building of the spiritual temple of restored humanity is slow he does not 'make haste.' It is enough for him to be a fellow-worker with God in the regeneration of man, and to know that God will in His own time hasten His work.

# XXI.

## AMBITION, TRUE AND FALSE.[1]

'*Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not.*'—JER. xlv. 5.

'STUDY to be quiet,' writes S. Paul to the Thessalonians; and the words (φιλοτιμεῖσθε ἡσυχάζειν) to a Greek would be more of a paradox than they are to us. For they would mean to him, 'Let your ambition be to be calm,' and would at once suggest the contrast between the feverish, restless ambition (φιλοτιμία) of the man who lives a public life, and the peaceful quietude (ἡσυχία) of the contemplative and philosophic nature. But does S. Paul really mean to denounce ambition and set his imprimatur on quietism? Is it in any sense consistent with Christianity to do this? Do we not owe the very formulating of this theory of philosophic calm to a school of philosophers,[2] which made a dogma of scepticism and despair of truth, and adapted itself only too well to a jaded and

[1] Preached in the Chapel Royal, Whitehall, 1888.

[2] The New Academy.

weary age? And do we not owe the more Christian form of that teaching to those who, in an evil age, shunned the world they could not overcome, and took refuge from the struggles with external evil in a life of retirement? And can Christianity do this? Can it ever, in the presence of all the aggregated misery and wretchedness and sin of our great cities, simply leave the contest, and seek for quiet and contemplation alone in the Presence of God? Never! And if Christianity for one moment falls to that low level, it has failed, failed to be the religion of man, failed to be in any true sense the religion of Christ.

But we have only to turn from such false interpretations of great principles to the great lives in which those principles lived and wrought; not alone, indeed, but limited and conditioned by those other truths which the active and the energetic and the vigorous hold dear. We have but to look at the life of Him Who founded the Divine society of men, who were to be 'in the world' and yet not 'of the world,' and Who went about doing good; we have but to look at the lives of His first followers, nay, His true followers in every age, and we shall find among them the men who shook the world, not by sitting still, but by the earnest, real, far-reaching, onward-looking life.

I. On leaving for a moment the great lives of the

heroes of Christianity, and looking at men of our own time, what is our judgment as to the true life, the life that is really GREAT? We are wonderfully clear-sighted in seeing the faults of other lives, however blind we may be to the faults of our own. And what are the lives which we instinctively know to be not true lives, but poor and petty and unworthy, though lived perhaps amid all the accessories of greatness, lives which, as we look back upon them, we know to be not the lives which man as man should strive to realise?

(*a*) Certainly among these we should place the lives *which have no ambition.* The man of low aims, or of no aims, is not a true man. He is no true man who is only anxious to discover the *intellectual* minimum which will enable him to hold his own among his friends, the *moral* minimum demanded by the rank of life in which he lives. She is no true woman whose horizon is bounded by the petty interests of her own circle and the everyday conversation of ordinary society. That workman or tradesman is no true man whose chief care is not to be 'righteous overmuch,' to be neither more nor less honest in his work or trade than the men he lives amongst. That servant is no true man or woman whose work is done as matter of eye-service, with little care that it be

done well, and 'unto the Lord.' In a word, that life is not a true life which has no ambition. It is not the life of a true, free man. It is a slave's life, and society, or circumstances, or public opinion, or the conventions of the rank in which we live is the taskmaster and overseer.

(β) But this is not the only type of life which we feel to fall short of being a true, human life. We often see men and women of great moral and religious earnestness oppressed by the mass of evil in the world, and yet without a hope of making things better. And so they sit still and fold their hands and talk despairingly of 'a world in tatters,' of a decay and disintegration which they have not the heart to try and resist. If they do not become embittered and cynical, they are at least hopeless. They are in the condition of him who afterwards became the great reformer of the fifteenth century, when surveying the ruin of the world and the ruin of the church, he sought a 'sors Virgiliana,' and found it in the words

'Heu fuge crudeles terras et litus avarum.'

He fled and hid himself in a convent, till in God's Providence he was stirred to a new and nobler life. Savonarola was too real and true a man to rest in inactivity as so many are content to do now.

(γ) But yet if we think of lives without high aim and lives of weariness and despair as offering no true standard for us to aim at, is the life we call *ambitious* any more really attractive? In one sense, *yes*. It is a life and not a death, or a state of slavery,—it does show the desire for progress, the instinct of vitality, the sense of power. And yet through all its forms, or most of them, there runs the taint of selfishness which we hate. In little things or great we see it; in the man who lives on praise, who is content to place his happiness in the opinions of others, who loves show and would be thought great, and that often by all means and at any cost. If he is beaten in the competition, he is wretched: if he succeeds, he is unsatisfied; for there is still a height beyond. And for the few men who have been permitted to reach the summit of earthly ambition there is the weariness of one who has 'no new world to conquer,' and is in hourly fear of losing that which he has won. All the glitter and the glory of such a successful life cannot, except for a moment, blind us as to its unreality. It is not our true life, not the life of which, as we stand face to face with eternity in the hour of death, we can say, 'That is the life I would wish to have lived, the life that I would try and live if I had to begin my life again.' No, it was not the true life, and yet there

was truth in it, far more than in those nerveless, forceless lives of which I have spoken. There was truth in it, but there was falseness too. It has pronounced its own sentence again and again. Not from the cynical utterances of onlookers only, but from the lips of those who once believed in that false theory of life, we learn its unreality and hollowness. We do not realise it. The stored-up wisdom of those who have tried that life and found it wanting does not influence us much. And yet their witness agrees together. The world's prizes are but Dead Sea apples. The hand that seizes them finds that they are dust, unreal, shadow-hunting, the confusion of the seeming with the true,—that is what those who know tell us about earthly ambition.

II. And is that all? Can we not get beyond and behind the antithesis of two false lives? Can we never see them in their unity and their truth? Is not the forward-reaching life real? Is not the life lived in the future real? Is not he who devotes himself to an ideal living a true life, a life worthy to be a model life for man? Must we not, as the very condition of a great life, seek for greatness, if we can only learn what true ambition is, and what makes ambition false and self-destructive?

'Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them

not.' *For thyself.* There we may find the clue to the problem. Do men live for greatness, or do they live for self? That is the real question. For greatness and love of self are terms mutually exclusive. 'Israel,' says the prophet,[1] 'is an empty vine. He bringeth forth fruit unto himself.' It is not ambition which is 'the last infirmity of noble minds.' Milton was far too true a student of human nature to fall into that error, often as he is misquoted. It is *fame* and not ambition, the ambition which seeks to make a name amongst men, to be talked of and be in every one's mouth. To have invented an ingenious and new system or theory of life, whether true or false, that is what some men call fame. To say a clever thing though at the cost of a truth they love; to raise themselves by merely depressing others, or to be great amongst the little, 'a Triton among minnows' as the proverb goes, a centre or one of the centres of a mutual admiration society, this is the false view of greatness which makes ambition a term of reproach. And if that is what ambition means, then perish ambition from the Christian life! But it is *not.* To rest in mere outward seeming is to degrade a noble impulse, an impulse which in its true nature leads us onwards, upwards, Godwards. To seek for great things

[1] Hosea x. 1.

is your greatness; to seek them for yourself is the devil's parody, the tare which is not the wheat, though it is strangely like it.

Look at the perfect life, the life of the Son of God, and see what its temptation was. The temptation with which Satan tempted Christ was pre-eminently the temptation which might and does assail successfully a noble nature. Christ had come into the world with a great and noble purpose, a true 'ambition,' if in the face of all the false meanings which gather round that word we may dare to use it. He came to do His Father's business; His meat was to do His Father's Will; His solace in prayer, as at Calvary, was, 'I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.' And as He enters upon His active life the tempter assails Him, strives to turn aside ambition to its baser end. He reads his own selfish nature into Christ. 'Your ambition is to have a kingdom, to get power, then work a miracle. Turn stones into bread. Cast Thyself down from the pinnacle and receive a kingdom ready to thy hand. Do this, and by that act worship me, and all shall be Thine.' And if Christ had listened to the tempter's words His ambition would have been no more a world-transforming power, but the petty, miserable craving after self which the world knows so well. But He answers by an appeal

instinctive and immediate to God's Word, God's Will, God's Glory, and the temptation has failed.

We are able, then, to distinguish between true and false ambition. We have got a criterion, a test, a password as a soldier has, by which we may know friend from foe. All who are not settled down in contented indolence are seeking for greatness. They know that greatness is their inherent right: they may not be able to explain it, but they cannot explain it away. Man is not as the beasts that perish. He is great. He must seek great things. He must fulfil the laws of his being. He cannot live the life of the ox or the ass. He must look higher. What is his greatness? Let the philosopher answer. He is no thing of nature. He is not a brute; he is not a machine; he is not a slave. He is a free cause, a self-conscious personality. What is his greatness? Let revelation answer. 'Thy gentleness has made me great.' 'God was made man that man might be made God.'[1]

Our ambition, then, is to live the life of that nature which Christ has taken into God. In such a view of what greatness is, self-love, self-gratification, self-glorification simply have no meaning, for 'self' is not. My individual self is that in which my weakness, my little-

[1] S. Ath., *De Incarnat.* c. 54.

ness lies; my true humanity is my real greatness. I seek for 'great things.' They are the correlative of, they belong to, my great nature which the Eternal Word has lifted into God. To *be* rather than to seem, to suffer rather than to *do*,—that is true ambition.

What is it that constituted the real greatness of him whose death, so long foreseen, has yet come upon us so suddenly at last?[1] Judged by the superficial and external tests by which men often measure greatness, what a failure that life was! The prize of empire touched only by a dying hand! The sweets of power tasted only for three short months, and even these saddened by constant suffering and the sure knowledge of approaching death! And yet we know that his life was not a failure, for it was *great*. We cannot but be struck by the pathetic contrasts which we noted in the events of the last few months of that life. We remember him as we saw him, many of us, just a year ago joining in the Jubilee rejoicings of our Queen in all the pride of manhood, and then we remember how a few months afterwards all Europe was waiting breathlessly for news from Berlin and San Remo, not knowing whence the tidings of death was first to come. We remember the deathbed scene which closed the long and glorious reign of the first

[1] The Emperor Frederick of Germany.

German Emperor, and as we hailed the accession of the son we knew the hand of death was on him, and he was already stricken with a fatal malady. And now, after scarce three months, the end has come, and we picture to ourselves another deathbed, and gathered round it the widowed Empress, our own Princess, and the bridegroom son and the new young Emperor on whom the eyes of Europe now are turned in hope and fear. But not all the tragic and pathetic interest of these last months can make us forget, except for a moment, what it was which made the Emperor Frederick *great*. He was a soldier who loved not war; a Prince who dared, ay, even against his father and his King, to stand up for national liberties; an Emperor who hated autocratic government and fought for religious toleration; a man who knew how to do his duty at all costs, and schooled himself in that lesson which, almost with his last breath, he sought to teach his son, 'to suffer without complaining.' These are the men who teach us what true greatness is. It is not empire makes them great but they who add lustre to a throne. We forget the successful general, the peace-loving sovereign, even the much-enduring sufferer, in the man who simply dared to do his duty, and whether in active service or in heroic patience, in strenuous effort for the

Fatherland or in quiet submission to the Will of God, to play the man. And now he has passed from among us. *Domine, dona ei pacem æternam, et perpetua lux illuceat ei.*

Is that, brethren, the ambition of our lives,—to live the true, brave life of duty, and to seek for greatness, not in earthly glory, but in *moral strength*? Give yourselves to what work in life you will, that ambition is the true ambition, the only one which will bear the test of time, the only one which will not fail or cloy. 'When we build,' says John Ruskin, 'let us think that we build for ever.' If that is wise when we build material structures, how much more so in the fabric of a life? Is it nothing amid all the jarring opinions of men, all the false views of happiness, to be able to face death and say, 'I can look back over life. I can see many a failure and many a shortcoming. And yet I know my ambition was true, my life was real; I built for eternity and not for time, and eternity has set its seal upon my work. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith.'

One word and I have done. Two men, at the close of a long life, have left us their judgment of that life given in the near presence of death. Both were great men. Both will live in the memories of men, and yet

the ambition of the one was *true*, of the other *false*. One, a self-made man, who, from obscure origin, raised himself to greatness, who 'sounded all the depths and shoals of honour,' the favourite of his king, the most remarkable figure of his age, one who, as we know now from the evidence of State papers, swayed for a time the destinies of Europe,—disgraced and dishonoured by the fickleness of a tyrant,—Cardinal Wolsey has passed that well-known sentence on his life: 'Had I but served God as diligently as I have served my king, He would not have given me over in my grey hairs.' The other, in the days of persecution, a saint of God who in his old age is soon to be given to the wild beasts in the stadium at Smyrna, is called upon to deny his faith, just to admit that his life had been a mistake, just to say that his was no true ambition, and his answer, the answer of S. Polycarp, which vibrates and finds an echo in every earnest Christian life, is given, —'Eighty-and-six years have I now served Christ, and He has never done me wrong. How, then, can I blaspheme my Saviour and my God?'

Both had lived great lives, both had sought 'great things'; but the stain of earth was on the one, the glory of heaven rested on the other. The one sought greatness for himself; the other sought it not.

## XXII.

## SELF-CONSECRATION THE KEY TO THE SOLUTION OF DIFFICULTIES[1]

'*Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus.*'—Col. iii. 17.

The circumstances of the Church of Colosse at the time at which S. Paul wrote offer in some respects a curious parallel to those of our own day. The transition from Judaism to Christianity, wherever it took place, meant the substitution of principles for rules, of a universal for a national religion, of natural for positive morality. Christianity, as contrasted with Judaism, was all-embracing, not selective; its principle was permeation, not separation; a life, not a law. And it was only gradually that those who accepted Christianity learned to live in its atmosphere. There was still the survival of the old, the old narrowness, the old exclusiveness, the old self-righteousness. The

[1] Preached in Whitehall, July 1888.

spirit which breathes in the Pharisee's prayer, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are'—the spirit which was ready to say, 'Stand by thyself; come not near to me, for I am holier than thou,' lived long after Judaism died, and has its representatives in the Christianity of the sixteenth or the nineteenth centuries.

And this Jewish spirit, as we may call it (remembering, however, that it is not peculiar to Judaism), had at Colosse found an ally in the system of a very different character, and the result had been an informal compact between Judaism and Gnosticism, between a spirit of obedience to the letter of a divinely-appointed law and a spirit which challenged and questioned and refused to accept anything on faith or authority. Between formalism and rationalism we might argue there could be little in common. But the facts of the Colossian Church prove the contrary. And it is not difficult to see some of the points on which they might agree, and in which both were opposed to the teaching of Christianity.

(*a*) Both were animated by an exclusive aristocratic spirit.[1] The Jew looked upon the seed of Abraham as singled out by God among all the nations of the earth. The Gnostic taught that he *knew* what the

[1] Bishop Lightfoot, *Ep. ad Coloss.* p. 77.

vulgar only believed. The national exclusiveness of the Jew allied itself with the intellectual exclusiveness of the Gnostic. And both were opposed to a gospel which knew no difference between circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free.

(β) Then Gnosticism, which in all its forms held the utter antagonism between matter and spirit, seized upon the prohibitions of the Mosaic Law, its distinction between clean and unclean, lawful and unlawful, and carried them out into what, in theory at least, was a rigid asceticism. Here Essenism had, amongst the Jews, prepared the way for Gnosticism. For the Essene was ascetic and mystic, and in his speculative tendencies was constantly approximating to those of the Gnostic. Among these ascetics marriage was forbidden, animal food and wine were absolutely unlawful, and Josephus tells us that excommunicated Essenes would die of starvation rather than eat food of any kind prepared by defiled hands. In the extreme form of Essenism we thus approach the Gnostic doctrine that matter is the abode of evil and that the satisfaction of natural cravings is itself a sin, while Christianity, on the other hand, taught that marriage might be honourable in all, and that every creature of God is good.

(γ) Then, again, Judaism looked upon the Christ as a condemned malefactor, Who had claimed to supersede the Law of Moses, and declared Himself to be not only greater than Abraham, but one with the Father. Here, too, Gnosticism fought side by side with Judaism. It could conceive of countless emanations, 'angels,' as they are called in this Epistle, mediating in a long series between God and man, spirit and matter. But the doctrine of the Incarnation cut through all their theories. For it taught that the real antagonism was between God and sin, not between God and matter; for the fulness of God, [the πλήρωμα] from which, according to their teaching, came all those agencies through which at various times God has acted upon the world of matter, dwelt in Jesus Christ in a bodily form. He was not an emanation, or even the first and highest of emanations from God, He *was God*, 'in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.'[1] 'It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.'[2] And yet He was *very man*.

Christianity in our day is opposed by similar forces, nay, by the same forces, though in a different form. There are those who have never realised the universality of the love of God, but who imagine that there

[1] Col. ii. 9. [2] Col. i. 19.

is an inner circle, a religious aristocracy, of the elect, for whom Christ died, and for whom alone the blessings of pardon and peace were won, while the rest of mankind God willed to pass over and leave in hopeless misery. That is Calvinism; yes, but it is the belief of many who are not avowed Calvinists, though it is clean contrary to the teaching of Church and Bible, and a denial of the truth that God is Love.

And then there are those who, without exactly putting Christianity on one side, lay claim to a kind of higher knowledge. They can separate the kernel from the husk, the spirit from the letter. They know exactly what was meant by Christ to be permanent, what transient; and they laugh in their higher wisdom at people who, in this wise nineteenth century, believe, as their fathers believed, in Church and Creed and Sacrament and Bible. They have no quarrel with Christianity, if only we will let them explain what Christianity means. These are the people who can 'shake hands all round,' who in the width and extent of their knowledge can condescend to recognise the partial truths which religious systems have seized and obscured.

And if these modern representatives of Judaistic and Gnostic thought do not often unite, they are

at one in their contempt for old-fashioned teaching about universal and free salvation, which knows neither national nor intellectual nor property qualifications, but claims to set before man as man a true citizenship, a Christian wisdom, a Divine life.

And if we ask how S. Paul combated these tendencies in the Colossian Church, we may get a hint as to the best way of meeting these parallel teachings of our own day. I am speaking not of a speculative but of a practical answer. For S. Paul is writing neither to theologians nor to philosophers, but to the faithful Christians of Colosse, who were confused and puzzled by the teaching which was the practical outcome of false principles. But what is so wonderful in S. Paul is the way in which he brings some great theological truth down at once into the arena of practical life and practical duties. And conversely his practical advice rests on and at once suggests the ground from which it springs.

What, then, is S. Paul's answer? Whether in speculation or action, in theory or practice, he had but one,—*Jesus Christ.* 'I determined to know nothing,' he says to the Corinthians, 'but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.' 'We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but to them that believe, both Jews

and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.' So in this strange fusion of Jewish and Greek thought at Colosse he appeals to the same truth. On its speculative side, the teaching of Jesus Christ is the truth of the *Incarnation*; on the practical side, it is the duty of *self-consecration*. Instead of the long series of Gnostic æons, there is but the one link between God and man. 'The image of the invisible' is also 'the first-born of every creature.'[1] 'In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in Him.' The supposed antagonism between matter and spirit is not. For Christ has taken human nature into God. And so taking it, He has consecrated it. In His Resurrection we are risen. His life is our life, and our life is hid with Christ in God.[2] For a little while we must struggle, and mortify and kill down in us that which yet has a bias towards earthly things and fights against our true self; but when Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then we shall also appear with Him in Glory.[3] It is not a ladder with many rungs which connects spirit and matter, God and man, but only the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. God is made man, and man is taken into God. In Christ is the fulness of God, and we are 'in Him.' Therefore, 'whatsoever

[1] Col. i. 15. [2] Col. iii. 1-3. [3] Col. iii. 4.

ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus.' You are His, claimed by Him: speak and act, then, in the consciousness that you are what you are. Live up to your high dignity, walk worthy of your vocation. Be not deceived by what looks like volunteer humility, or would-be philosophy. Yours is the power of Christ and the wisdom of God. You cannot worship Angels, for you are one with Him Who is the King of Angels. You cannot live a life of formal obedience to human ordinances. 'Touch not, taste not, handle not, which perish in the using.' These are 'the rudiments of the world,' and ye are Christ's, drawing your life and nourishment from Him, Who is the Head.

*Self-consecration*, that is S. Paul's answer to the practical problem, the clue which is to enable the Colossian Christians to avoid alike formalism and lawlessness, a speculative philosophy and an unreasoning and unreasonable submission to rule. And is not that, brethren, the real key to the problems of our day too? Personal devotion to Christ, the desire to speak and act in His Name, to live as those who know that their truest life is His life in them. It is a noble thing, no doubt, to consecrate our faculties, our talents, our gifts to God; it is a nobler thing to consecrate ourselves. And the higher includes the

lower. Nay, the 'hallowing of work' is only possible through the consecration of self.

And is not the steadiness and fixity of purpose which comes from self-consecration just what we want in these days of ours? All the old beliefs are being questioned; all the old religious practices are put upon their defence; we are offered quite new views of what really was 'the faith once delivered to the saints'; and men, who confidently prove that the faith of the Church is wrong, have no shadow of doubt that they themselves are right. And it really is true,—I suppose all thinking men must admit it,—that ours is a transition age. We have found out that there are post-reformation accretions to be got rid of, as once there were mediæval errors to purge away. At the Reformation we learned that Christianity is not Popery; to-day we are learning that it is not Calvinism either. Some of the old methods, too, are no longer practicable. There is less discipline than there was. We do not believe as much as the sixteenth century did in Acts of Uniformity. We have learned to be tolerant, to live and let live, even to ask ourselves what is the truth which this or that view, false though we believe it to be, has seized upon, and how can we claim it?

But transition means unsettlement, and unsettle-

ment is full of danger to faith and morals. Some will abandon the struggle for truth and right, and let things go. The old has passed away, they argue. It will be the same with anything we put in its place. Let us live on as best we may, without any religious system or theory of life. And others, seeing the danger of this haphazard way of living, try to galvanise into life a state of things which is passing away, to enforce it by disciplinary sanctions, to oppose every sort of change as if it was an attack upon the faith, and then to get heartless and despairing as they see things moving on and themselves left to a vain policy of protest.

Now, it seems to me that it is just here that S. Paul's counsel to the Colossians is a true counsel to us. If he could write to us of this day, how do you think he would deal with the difficulties which trouble us? Would he look about for a new clue, or would the old one serve for us? Surely he would begin by taking his stand firmly on the truth of self-consecration to the Incarnate Lord. Change, he would say, is a law of life and a condition of growth. An organism which can no longer assimilate and adapt itself to new conditions is dying or dead. A panic-stricken clinging to the old, no less than the reckless abandonment of it, is unworthy of those who

know that they are Christ's and Christ is God's. To dare to speak and act in the Name of the Lord Jesus is not only to look out fearlessly upon the new truths, new methods, new theories, and claim them for Him, knowing that nothing is incapable of consecration to Him Who made all, nothing is common or unclean; it is also to have a test by which we may regulate our practice, and guard ourselves against the opposing errors of mere formal and conventional obedience to rule and the defiant rejection of everything that we have not invented for ourselves. In days of transition like ours we are sure to make mistakes—to confuse the transient and the permanent, to get the parts of the whole, as it were, out of proportion and out of focus. And no one is so sure to do this as the man who knows just exactly where to draw the line, and be right when every one else is wrong. But there is one thing in which we can be sure of being right, and it is that which is often least thought of by those who are so ready to set us all right. I mean the spirit in which we approach the problem. 'Do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus.' Even those, (and God knows how many they are,) who cannot see in Jesus Christ, as we see, the God-Man, the Eternal Word, Who has for ever consecrated human nature by taking it into God, those who

see in Him only the ideal of moral purity and truthfulness and simplicity, may in their own way get a hint worth getting and worth using. Even for them to 'do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus' would mean at least this—to put moral truth first and make moral considerations paramount. To act and speak, as He would have acted and spoken, is at least to banish for ever that reckless system-making which so often usurps the name of criticism. It is to cut through at once the fallacy which, when stated as a paradox, seems to be almost true, that we can never get a true view of a religious system till we have outgrown it. It is wonderful how many people there are who want to set Christianity right from outside, approaching the question, as they would say, with an unprejudiced mind. But an unprejudiced mind in that sense means a mind which has made itself incapable of understanding the question as completely as an unscientific mind is incapable of appreciating the weight and bearing of scientific evidence. The very first condition, then, of arriving at a true judgment in Christian questions is that we approach them with the moral earnestness and truthfulness of Christ.

But for those of us who see in Him not only the moral earnestness of a true-hearted man, but the

power and love of One Who is very God, the doing all in the Name of the Lord Jesus means something higher still. It means, what it meant for S. Paul, the gentleness and meekness of a pure and earnest moral nature, combined with the strength of Him Who was One with the Father.

To speak and act in the Name of the Lord Jesus is to feel at every moment that He is with us and in us, that we are lifted out of ourselves, that, come what will, we can face changed circumstances, new truths, wider views of what Christianity means, and yet rest calm and still, strong in the strength of a consecrated life, and in the sure trust in the victory of truth.

# XXIII.

## JUDGMENT.[1]

'*I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.*'
—S. John xii. 47.

There is, for most of us, a sharp contrast between the group of associations which gathers round Christmastide and that other group which is suggested most naturally by Advent. The keynote of Christmas is *Love*, the dominant thought of Advent is *Judgment*. And the contrast, almost the contradiction, between the two ideas is not removed by distinguishing the First Advent from the Second. Such a distinction is plainly stated in the Collect for the First Sunday in Advent, which contrasts this present life or state of being in which Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility, and 'the last day when He shall come again in His glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and the dead.' But there still remains in our

[1] Preached in Whitehall, 1888.

consciousness the fact of that contrast between the love of the Incarnation and the sternness of the Day of Judgment.

And if we turn from the Church to the Bible, and seek for an explanation in our Lord's own words, the contradiction is even more marked. 'I judge no man, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world,'[1] and yet elsewhere the same Divine Person declares, 'For judgment am I come into this world.'[2] Nay, 'the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.'[3] 'He hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man;'[4] and finally, 'I judge no man: and yet if I judge, My judgment is true.'[5]

There is no mere verbal inconsistency here—nothing which a revised version or a revised text can get rid of. Rather, we have here the expression of a deep moral truth finding utterance in a verbal contradiction,—the truth, namely, that love and judgment ever go hand in hand. It is no accident—that frequent association in the language of the New Testament writers of the love which saves and the judgment which destroys. Ye pass over 'judgment and the love of God,' says our Lord to the Pharisees. 'Behold,

[1] S. John xii. 47. [2] *Ibid.* ix. 39. [3] *Ibid.* v. 22. [4] *Ibid.* v. 27. [5] S. John viii. 15-16.

therefore, the goodness and severity of God,' says S. Paul to the Romans, 'on them which fell severity; but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in His goodness.' But S. Paul knew of no 'absolute decrees.' If the good abide not in His goodness, they shall be cut off, while, if the wicked abide not in unbelief, they shall be grafted in. There is not goodness for one and severity for others, but both for all.

It is no accident, again, that the sternest utterances about judgment should be found in the Gospel of S. John, and the most uncompromising antagonism between the love of Christ and the love of the world characterise the Epistle of the Apostle of love.

What, then, is the deep moral truth which thus connects severity and love, judgment and salvation, Advent and Christmas? If it is a moral truth, it will not appear only in the region of religion. It will be there most clearly, most uncompromisingly, most prominently, but it must find its echo in the moral experience of us all.

The object, the meaning, the purpose, the innermost design of God in the Incarnation is the salvation of the world. 'I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.' Nothing less than this could express the aim of Him Who is perfect Love, and Who, because He is Love, came in great humility and took the

servant's nature and suffered the death of the Cross. This is the precious truth enshrined in the Creed. 'For us men and for our salvation He came down from heaven and was incarnate and was made man, and suffered, and died, and rose again from the dead.' It is the character of the Saviour, not that of the Judge, in which Christ wills to appear.

But men misinterpret and misunderstand this truth. They do not see that God's action upon human nature is not mechanical but moral, that as mankind cannot be saved in spite of itself, so the gift or offer of salvation cannot leave man where he is. Judgment is thus not the *purpose* but the *inevitable result* of the offer of love. And it is all one whether we say that Christ judges, or that man sentences himself by the way in which he receives the offer of salvation. God wills all men to be saved,—there is not a shadow of doubt about that truth, for those who read the Bible without the misdirection of a favourite theory. He would not be Love if His love were selective, less wide than humanity, if the second Adam did not gather up human nature into Himself as fully and as perfectly as the Father of the race. But though God wills all men to be saved, and wills not the death of a sinner, but that all should repent and live, the result of that world-wide love is a separa-

tion, a judgment between those who receive and those who receive not. The love of God must needs judge the unloving and unlovable, as the incoming of light reveals the contrast between foul and fair.

Is it not a significant thing that, in the parable in which more clearly than anywhere we see the process of judgment, the Judge speaks as He does. 'Come, ye blessed children of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared'—for whom? Not for you, but 'for the devil and his angels.' How, then, have they whom God wills to be blessed become cursed? Not by God; they are not cursed by the Father's Will, or, as men dared once to imagine, predestined to damnation, but by their own act, because by rejection of love and goodness they sentenced themselves to the society of those who are eternally separated from good. Yet it was the revelation of infinite love which made the separation. 'I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.' Yet 'for judgment,' as an inevitable result of My coming, 'I am come.'

Surely, brethren, it is this which makes the teaching of Jesus Christ so true to moral facts. There is none of that easy optimism which some people would read into the love of God. The message of

salvation and the message of judgment are never really separated. There is ever something of 'sternness' in Jesus Christ. His world-wide love is not limited by but implies in it severity to all unreality and hatred of good, to all that is unloving and unlike itself and yet the tenderness deepens as the sternness becomes more terrible.[1] To distinguish the Old Testament as the revelation of God as Righteousness, and the New as the revelation of God as Love, is false, utterly false, unless we have realised that in the revelation of love not one jot or tittle of the Old Testament teaching about righteousness is done away. It is still true, true for ever, that the Righteous Lord loveth Righteousness, but the ungodly and him that delighteth in wickedness doth His soul abhor. And that is why He, Who is perfect Love, and came 'not to judge, but to save,' is still a Judge. 'This is the condemnation. Light hath come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.'

And how true all this is, to the experience of our moral nature! Man, however he came to be so, is a moral being. He cannot escape the judgment of right and wrong. Men's standards differ, their criterion differs, their moral status differs, their theory of the nature of right differs, their judgments differ.

[1] Dean Church, *Discipline of the Christian Character*, p. 91.

But it is inseparable from the nature of man that he judges, and distinguishes right and wrong. And this judgment of right and wrong carries with it a self-judgment, even when we are half-conscious or unconscious of it. We find ourselves in the presence of some revelation of right; some noble or unselfish character comes before us; we read some book of high and pure tone; we hear of some act of unselfishness or self-devotion or moral heroism. It is a gleam of light from the Source of light; we know it at once as a vision of righteousness, and in the moment and act of recognition we are judged by it. It speaks to us with the imperial claim of Right; it calls us to be like it in thought and act, to recognise its claim upon our allegiance. How do we meet its claim? Either we close with it or we resent it. We recognise it as the true and the right, and in recognising it judge ourselves as, so far and in that comparison, untrue and false, or we shrink from it, shut our eyes to it, justify ourselves before it, or explain it by some selfish interested motive. And even so we are judged, judged and condemned by that truth and right which we have recognised and put away from us. That ray of righteousness was the means by which we might have been raised to a higher level. It did not come 'to judge but to save,' and yet by its presence we are judged.

Or by what seems to us the accident of life we are thrown in the way of some one who is better, higher, nobler than ourselves, one of those rare characters which, though in the world, are not of the world, which, even from the thoughtless and selfish, win some meed of admiration and reverence. There is a purity of motive, a simplicity and single-heartedness which we cannot mistake and fain would imitate. But to imitate it, even to recognise it, is to judge ourselves for our own littleness and pettiness and weakness, our unreality and shallowness and worldliness. And we hate to despise ourselves, and at once the suggestion rises, 'May not all this goodness be external and unreal, or selfish at its source?' And we recall the memory of shattered ideals, or of men we once reverenced, and found to be unworthy of reverence, and the cynical distrust of real goodness grows upon us, and we are already drawing ourselves away from that life which, by its beauty, judges us and makes us in our own eyes contemptible. We have dragged it down to our level, or we have thrust it away from us. We dare not recognise it as true and good; that would be to condemn ourselves. Yet, brethren, the judgment, ay, the condemnation, has gone forth out of our own mouth. And in our quiet moments of self-questioning we know it. We are not what we

were. We are lower, worse, more opposed to good. The light was there and we shut our eyes to it. We chose the darkness, knowing it to be darkness. And already our eye sees less clearly, our ear is less quick to catch the whispered commands of Right, our conscience is seared. We are judged. This is the condemnation. The light came into our world of thought and feeling, and seeing it we shut our eyes and loved the darkness rather than the light.

And if we turn from the inward judgment of our own conscience to the judgment of the world at large, we see the same process ever going on. Its letters are 'writ large,' but they are still the same. Here, too, men differ in all the tests they apply to goodness, in all their standards of what men ought to aim at, in the very principles which underlie the distinction between the true and the false. But there is one principle on which we are all agreed, and it is this: that responsibility is according to privileges, and men must be judged according to their lights. The premium which is now so often put on acts which conduce to the common good is not able to obscure the truth that moral judgment is not of conduct but of character, and character can be judged only by one who knows the opportunities, the influences, the knowledge, in presence of which the character was

formed. Nothing so readily appeals to our modern conscience as the stern judgment of Christ on those who had misused their opportunities. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! Why? Because of the mighty works which were done in you. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees! The publicans and harlots may hope for the mercy of God before those who, under the smooth surface of respectable religion, covered sins committed in the very light of God's revelation. And this connection of responsibility and privilege means simply this, does it not,—that every gift of God, every revelation of truth or goodness, every opportunity of knowing what is right, though it comes not to judge but to save, yet inevitably judges, separates, as Christ upon the Cross separated the penitent and the impenitent thieves, those who accept and those who reject Him? It is a terrible thing to have had great privileges, to have even for a moment come in contact with that which is above ourselves. For it must judge us, either raising us in earnest longing and self-contempt to its own level, or leaving us, if we reject it, judged and condemned.

Something even of a dim reflection of the same facts we may see outside the world of responsible life. We do not blame the vegetable or the animal for what

it does or does not, but we see the same process of separation going on. Conditions change. The living thing finds itself in a new environment, a state of being favourable to what we call progress in the upward movement of created things. And that new environment is a savour of *life and death.* It exalts or it destroys according as the living thing conforms or fails to conform itself to the new condition. It cannot be simply what it was. The new conditions become its probation. It is saved or killed.

Whether in the natural and non-moral world, then, or in the world of responsibility, public or private, we see a great law which holds. And the revelation of Christ does not cut across it, but carries on that law. Every revelation of right, of human goodness, of high and noble conduct, is a broken light from Him Who is the Sun of Righteousness, the Perfect Man, the realised Ideal of humanity, Who is also very God. He has come in great humility, indeed, but in all the perfectness of moral beauty, in all the fulness of a world-wide love, in all the sternness of righteous judgment.

What think ye of Christ? Your judgment on Him is His judgment on yourselves; rather in judging Him you pass judgment on yourselves. 'If I had not done among them the works that none other man did, they

had not had sin, but now they have both seen and hated.' Whom did you hate as your eye fell upon Christ? Whom did you reject? Christ and His claim? or your old self, with all its poor miserable would-be righteousness which in that light seemed so beggarly and worthless? By that hatred, that rejection of yourself, you in a moment set yourself in heart and will and, by God's grace, in your whole life afterward on the side of righteousness, as surely as by rejecting Him you declare yourself to love darkness rather than light.

'Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord.' Such a self-judgment is your salvation. And Christ came to save, not to destroy. Through Him is focused and gathered up all that moral truth which glimmered in the days of old. Its claim is the same, save that it is clothed now with all the majesty of its own beauty, and the tenderness of the Saviour's appeal, Behold Me! behold Me! 'Come unto Me, for I am meek and lowly;' or with its sad reproach, 'Ye will not come unto Me.'

# XXIV.

## HEAVEN.[1]

'*Thine eyes shall see the King in His Beauty.*'—ISAIAH xxxiii. 17.

I SPOKE this morning of Judgment; not of the last Judgment, but of that process of which that which we call the final Judgment is but the last stage. We think too much of judgment under its legal aspect, of the Great White Throne, of the opened books, of the accuser and the advocate, even perhaps of some legal fiction whereby the guilty may be counted just, and we forget that the judgment, the great separation, begins here; that every revelation of God, every ray of goodness which strikes across our path, every opportunity for living a higher and saintlier life, determines us to the side of God or the devil, of heaven or hell. We shall need no Satan to accuse us in the day of final separation. Our own conscience will rise up against us; the ideals that we saw for a moment and put away from us with a sigh of relief, —nay, our full-grown hatred of God, will show to us and to the hosts of heaven that we have taken sides

[1] Preached at Whitehall, 1888.

and chosen our place on the left hand of the Judge. The whole stress and importance of the judgment is thrown back, as it were, to this life. Look around you, and you will see men taking their places, these gathering to the side of good and those to the side of evil, and over all the Loving God, He Who came not to judge the world but to save, and yet by the very offer of salvation must judge, is looking down, as once He looked on Israel who rejected Him, in tender, longing sadness. 'How often would I have gathered thy children together . . . and ye would not!'[1]

And just as people put off the judgment to a remote period, at or after death, and trust to all sorts of moral impossibilities to happen in the moment of death, or in the unknown waiting world, and so win a little time for carelessness and sin, so men put off heaven to a distant time, as if it were some region to which the angels would carry them, where in a moment they would realise the fulness of joy. But that is not the Christian view. According to the Christian view, as judgment begins in this life, and already men are separating into two great classes, so heaven itself begins here, and is a present thing. Perhaps that seems impossible—a mere paradox,—but if so, it is because we have been deceiving ourselves as to what heaven is.

[1] S. Matt. xxiii. 37.

Everybody who cares to call himself a Christian hopes to go to heaven when he dies, and heaven means his idea of happiness. But if we try and get nearer to people's thoughts as to what they really understand by heaven, we soon find that it means a different thing to different people, and except to a very few has really only a negative meaning.

For instance, people think of the sorrow and the trouble that there is in the world, and they say, 'Thank God, in heaven there will be no more sorrow nor sighing, for God shall wipe away all tears from off all faces.' As they look round and see, perhaps even feel in their own lives, what poverty and misery is, and, according as they are themselves poor and sad, are more able to sympathise with those who are, they love to remember that though in this life the poor shall never cease from out of the land, yet in the Presence of God there will be no property tests or gold-ring qualification, but the beggar Lazarus shall rest in Abraham's bosom. Or again, they think of the toil and weariness which is the lot of many, and the unkindness which makes so many a life sad, and they look forward to that place 'where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.' They yearn for the rest, the Sabbath-keeping, which remains for the people of God when this hurrying life is over. And I have heard, too, of people rejoicing in another

of the negative joys of heaven, which, though not stated in the Bible, we all feel to be a fact. I have heard people say there will be no sects in heaven, no divisions or strifes, either religious or social. We feel at once that these cannot be where God is, for divisions are the work of sin and selfishness and self-assertion; and God is Love. And others, who feel a longing for knowledge, look forward to the fulfilment of the promise that 'there shall be no night there,' none of those things which puzzle and confuse and distract us here, but that we shall have risen above and beyond our present partial knowledge, and shall rejoice in the Truth.

No doubt this way of fixing our thoughts on the negative joys of heaven is natural enough; all the more natural because of the acknowledged mysteriousness of that life which begins with death for God's children. 'Eye hath not seen,' says S. Paul, 'nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.' And so we fix our thoughts on what heaven is not, and almost forget that God has told us anything about *what it is*. Even those words I have just quoted from S. Paul are followed by a 'but,'—'But God hath declared them unto us by His Spirit'; from which it is clear that God has told us something definitely and positively about

heaven and its joys, but that these can only be understood by those who listen to the teaching of the Spirit.

In all these negative ideas of heaven the material, if not the evidence, is derived from the present life. We have hardly risen above the heathen conception of heaven as a place where we shall do what we like best to do here, only without the lets and hindrances and difficulties which mar the perfectness of our present being. There are few if any peoples or races who have not an idea of a life after death, but that life is coloured by the present; either it is the obverse of the sad reality, or it is the enhancement of present joys. Even if they have got so far as the idea that there will be in the next world a vindication of righteousness, they still think of that future state as in the main like the present. They exaggerate the pleasures of this present life—the pleasures of war, of the chase, even of sensuality. All that is far enough from the Christian idea of heaven; and yet Christians, so long as they think only of the negative joys of heaven, do but differ in degree from the heathen who knows not the revelation of God.

If we turn from these negative ideas and ask, What has God revealed to us by His Spirit? we find that we can trace everything back to one point.

I. Heaven is a happy place. There is no doubt about that. 'In Thy Presence is the fulness of joy,

and at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.' It is natural, no doubt, that men should conceive of this happiness as the opposite of all that makes them unhappy here, be it sorrow or suffering or want or sin. But happiness has a deeper meaning. It is simply the condition of that created thing which is doing that for which God created it; realising, as we say, the idea of its being. If the flower does not get its proper soil and light and air, it cannot grow to its true perfection. It pines and looks unhappy and dies. So man who was made for God, made to be happy in His Presence, is not and cannot be happy anywhere else. He is violating the very law of his being. All the deepest, most real, most lasting unhappiness is due to that. I do not mean, God forbid, that there is not enough of sadness and suffering and ill in the world. But there is no kind of ill which men may not rise above—have not risen above, except the misery of the life which will not give itself up to God. For 'God has made us for Himself, and our heart knows no rest till it rests in Him.' [1]

II. And then heaven is not only a happy place—it is a *holy* place. It is because it is holy that it is happy. Nothing that defileth can enter in. The Church triumphant, *i.e.* the Church in heaven, is adorned as a Bride for her husband. It is a glorious Church,

[1] S. Augustine, *Confessions*, I. i.

without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. They who stand before the Throne, sinners though they once were, have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They who behold God are the pure in heart. It is a kingdom established in righteousness and its citizens are all holy, the holy angels, the holy saints and martyrs, above all, the Holy Jesus.

III. And just as it is happy because it is holy, so it is holy because it is the presence-chamber of God. 'Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.' See Him as He is, in all the majesty of holiness and the tenderness of perfect love. We shall be with Him, and near Him,—nay, more than all, 'we shall be like Him when we see Him as He is.' That, then, is the great central truth which God has revealed to us about heaven. All else follows from this—the holiness, the happiness, the joy of heaven. 'In His Presence is the fulness of joy.' And so all the pictures which we have of heaven turn our eyes to that one point, God the All-holy, the All-righteous, the All-pure, in His Beauty. 'I saw the Lord sitting upon His Throne,' says the Prophet Isaiah, 'and His train filled the Temple.' And then he describes how the attendant hosts of the winged angels bowed in reverence before Him. So if we turn to the account in Daniel, or in the Revelation of S. John the Divine, the

central thought is that in heaven we are in the Presence of God, in the Presence of Him Who is chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely, before Whom angels veil their faces, and raise the unending song of Holy, Holy, Holy, to the Lamb that had been slain. And everything else, all those negative joys of heaven of which I spoke, follow from and depend upon the fact that heaven is the unveiled Presence of God, and the joy of that Presence absorbs our whole soul.

But now with this, which is the Christian view of heaven in our minds, we see how sharply it contrasts with the view which most people have. There are numbers who look forward to heaven as a time when they will have no more of the troubles and trials of earth, whatever in their own case those troubles and trials may be, and when revelation tells them that God is in heaven, they, as it were, throw that fact in and take little account of it, and go back at once in thought to what they mean by heaven—freedom from pain and suffering and sorrow. They want to be free from the consequences of sin, but they are far enough yet from hating sin and loving goodness. Or perhaps they fancy that in some wonderful way death, the mere act of dying, will change all their nature and give them that love of God and righteousness which at present they have not and do not seem to care to have.

Yet surely, brethren, the Presence of God is a terrible thing. To be in that unveiled Presence is heaven or hell. If it were possible for a soul which does not hate sin—and we cannot hate sin perfectly unless we love righteousness with all our heart—still, if it were possible for such a soul to be carried into God's Presence, there would be for it no fulness of joy, no pleasures for evermore, only wailing and gnashing of teeth. It would see the King, but His Beauty would be terrible. His holiness, His purity, His righteousness, would make such a soul shrink from Him in agony, and long to flee away to the society of more congenial beings. It would be ready to cry in its agony, Take me back to that old dark earth, with its sorrow, its pain, its tears; let its mountains fall on me, its hills cover me, anything to hide from me the awful holiness of God. I cannot be happy here. Heaven is not heaven, but hell. It is a terrible place. I believe if, by a miracle, the selfish rich man in the parable could have been carried over the great gulf which seemed to separate Lazarus from him, he would have carried the tormenting flame with him. The nearer to God, the more terrible the anguish of the soul that loves sin and hates holiness. Can there be a greater misery than to be for ever with that we hate? And it is against all that we know of character that a soul which, in this life, put God and love and purity and

holiness away from it, should in a moment develop a taste for the joys of heaven.

You will see, then, dear brethren, that just as judgment is a process which is ever going on, a process which the Last Judgment, as we call it, sums up and completes, so the heaven that we often allow ourselves to talk of as a future thing, the mere antithesis of our life here, has its beginning on this side the grave—nay, in its *essential* characteristics the joy of heaven is possible even in this life. Heaven is not a prize to be given in the next world for good conduct in this, but a present state of living in the joy of God's Presence, which shall be perfected hereafter. '*Now* are we the sons of God.' Nay, we may almost dare to say, if it is not possible for us here, it is not possible beyond the grave.

But if that is true in any sense, and just so far as it is true, it is no less true of hell. Heaven is nothing but the Presence of God; that is the joy and blessedness of the saints; and hell is nothing but separation from Him; separation from Him in spirit, though we may be in the burning light of His Presence. To be in the light of God and to hate Him, that is hell; to be in His Presence and to love Him, that is heaven. The one is to see the King in all the terrors of holiness, the other to see Him in His Beauty and be like Him for ever.

Our life here, then, is in either case the foretaste of what shall be. When Christ said, 'To sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it hath been prepared by My Father,' He surely was teaching the ambitious mother of James and John that His judgment was no capricious thing, but was determined by a law of righteousness eternal as God Himself. I know that the mercy of God, even in the moment of death, has saved the sinner, but it has saved the sinner from his sin, and in what seemed the last hour won him over to the side of God and good. The sinner must separate himself from sin, or heaven will not be heaven, and there will be not joy, but misery, in the Presence of God.

And God in His infinite love has willed that even in this life we should know the joy of heaven, the consciousness of His Presence which enables us to rise above the sorrows of life and see them in their true proportions. If we love God and His Presence before all things, if we feel it a comfort and a rest simply to know that His Eye is on us, if we love to be with Him in prayer, to hear Him speaking in His Word, to be made one with Him—O blessed privilege! —in the Sacrament of His Love, then surely we have a right to look forward to that fuller joy when His Presence shall be unveiled, and we shall see Him as

He is. Otherwise there is no joy for us in heaven, only the awful triumph of that righteousness which the sinner hates.

'God will have all men to be saved.' Never let anything obscure that truth or limit that love. But He Who came to save is by that very fact a judge. He wills that all should be happy, should enjoy that happiness for which He created them, but it must be by loving, as He loves, the holy, the just, the pure; it must be by joy in the Presence of a God of Righteousness; and only they who have struggled for the right, and loved the right and learned the joys of holiness, will know the fulness of joy when they are permitted to see the King in His Beauty, and behold the land which is very far off.

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